

Halo: Shock Troopers

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Summary: This story is in the process of being re-written. The re-write is Halo: Trials of the Few.

## 1. Intro: Battle of Sargasso

\*\*Welcome everyone to my first Halo fanfic! I've been planning to write a Halo fanfic for months now, so I hope you really enjoy it!

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><p><strong>2530, 20th January, Harvest.<strong>

>A bloody battle was raging on Harvest between the forces of the United Nations Space Command Marine Corps and the recently discovered alien onslaught known as the Covenant Empire. A few months ago, an entire elite squad of Orbital Drop Shock Troopers was recalled due to their senior officer being diagnosed with pregnancy in the middle of the war. She spent a long time onboard the refitted support ship called the UNSC Spirit of Fire until her child was born on the 20th of January, 2530. It was a boy and the mother immediately named him John Sandman in high hopes that he would become someone great. About two months after John's birth, his mother had to leave him for an assignment on an outer colony far away from Harvest.<p>

Meanwhile, John Sandman was transported to Mars to the city of New Paris, to the home of his grandparents. It was a risky ride as John was still an infant, but eventually he arrived to his grandparents and was raised as an intellectual and fit young man who attended a normal school, but as all schools, even that school had its bullies. John was abused due to his high intellect, but one day, when John was around twelve years old, he had just about enough of them. John decided to fight back one day, trying to prove to his school that the bunch of bullies was just a superstitious bunch of cowards, but he failed. He was beaten down, but not before he actually managed to

give a beatdown to their leader â€“ the strongest of them all.

The day after the fight, John decided to learn martial arts. He wanted to learn the Keysi Fighting Method â€“ the method that was advertised by some of his closest friends as the best street fighting method. He decided to learn Taijutsu on weekends as well to improve his unarmed combat skills.

After about five months and after showing his potential to his teachers, John challenged the school's abusers once again and quickly got into a fight in the school's football field during a sports lesson. John displayed his expert usage of the Keysi method when the group attacked him. He was literally hitting them in the knock-out spots without a problem as none of them were actually trained in deflecting attacks and John quickly ended the fight. He proved that he wasn't to be trifled with anymore.

For four years John had studied as best as he can and protected those who needed protection. Year after year, he proved to be rather good at hard sciences like biology and astronomy and even proving his knowledge in psychology. His biggest fear, of course, was mathematics as he had great trouble in understanding it.

In the 3rd of February, John's decisive hour had hit. He had went in a fight to protect his friend from seven bullies and he defeated them with a few scratches left on him. Sure, he got into great trouble from the principal and the teachers, but then a team of UNSC Marines arrived in the school when the principal was blaming John for the damage he had done to those seven, but the Marines intervened when they saw the potential in the boy.

''Principal!'' Their leader, a UNSC Marine Captain, interfered and took the boy on a walk along with the three Marines.

They walked around the football field and asked the boy his name.

''What's your name, son?'' The Captain asked, wanting to know the boy better.

''My name is John Sandman.'' The boy answered, looking at the shiny green Marine armor made of Titanium and ceramics and especially at the Captain who had customized his armor with all sorts of paintings including an emblem of his unit which was the 506th Tank Regiment that had the emblem of a UNSC tank with lightning bolts over it.

''Well, we didn't really see how you took down those other boys, but if you managed to take out seven without any help from anyone else, you have a potential.'' The Marine stopped and looked at the young boy through his helmet's HUD. ''You should enlist in the Marines right now.''

''But... I haven't finished school yet.'' John replied, looking back at his school when a Marine transport Warthog arrived near it.

''The Marines need every able person they can get to help us with our Innie problem that's spreading like a plague across the colonies.'' The Marine Captain hid the real purpose of the need for every able-bodied Human and he did that well. ''Besides, we can convince

the principal to let you into the exams right away and then you'll be done with school.''

"Hm... heck, I would appreciate that!" John smiled, knowing that he would finish school earlier than anyone else.

After he accepted the proposal of joining the UNSC Marine Corps at such a young age, John immediately began readying for the exams. He had to do an exam on History, Mathematics, English and one other language of his choice.

John aced all of his exams except for Mathematics and immediately left school for the nearest Marine Corps recruitment station. In the recruitment station, the same Captain that John met would be the one accompanying a company of recruits and reviewing applicants. He immediately let John past and pointed him at the Pelican that would be delivering him up to a frigate that would, in turn, deliver the recruits to their new home "Camp St. Angel on Reach, continent of Eposz.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Reach, Camp St. Angel, Eposz. February 20th, 1343 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*"Today, you will step away from your lives as civilians and become recruits!" A Drill Instructor announced while the First Platoon of Dog Company was still inside their Pelican. "On my command, you will run out of your comfortable little transport and find your yellow footprints. Did you get that?"

"Yes, Sir!" The Platoon shouted in acknowledgement and prepared to run out.

"Go! Go! Go!" The Drill Instructor announced and everyone left the Pelican, finding the yellow footprints painted on the ground.

"From this day onward, you are not simple civilians. You are Marine recruits. You are Humanity's best line of defense against any threats and you will be the trained just like anyone else " to their physical peak. You will train for seventy days with the last one being Graduation Day. After graduation, you will be immediately stationed on your new bases or ships and you will serve Earth and her colonies at the peak of your capabilities, above and beyond the call of duty." The Drill Instructor made a speech just before preparing the young Marines for their rigorous training. He looked over each and every one of them, remembering his own days in boot camp, but quickly got past it as he ordered the Marine recruits to assemble in a line and get ready to begin a new life. Camp St. Angel was located in a lush forest on the continent of Eposz. It was built like many other boot camps using the 21st century design to offer the most basic level of comfort for those living in it. It was a rather huge camp that could easily fit two entire regiments of Marines in it, but it was entirely focused on training these two regiments.

The twelve weeks passed away like if they were twelve years for John, but he was excelling in all three phases as the best recruit of the boot camp. John's results impressed even the most battle-hardened veterans that were attending the training and they even tried to up the ante for him during training, but even someone who excels cannot keep that up forever as John was getting worn out nearly as fast as the other recruits. During Marksmanship Training, John excelled at

mastering the BR55 Battle Rifle without using the 2x telescopic sights and was able to disassemble and reassemble it nearly as fast as their best soldiers. John was proving to be a real marksman as he also seemed to favor the M392 Designated Marksman Rifle for longer ranges.

The Crucible was the hardest part in John's training. 54 hours of testing what a Marine has learned with minimal sleep and food was definitely the biggest strain on a Human body that is acceptable. The Platoon was wandering around in a forest on Eposz with their Drill Instructors always keeping a keen eye over each and every one of the Marine recruits, trying to squeeze out the Marines out of them, simulating combat situations while making a seventy-seven kilometer march. Overall, the Crucible featured a simulation of a real war with smoke spreading around everywhere and the recruits being put on the edge of their capabilities.

After the Crucible, the Marine recruits were attending the ceremony in which they turned from recruits into Marines. That was after the Marines were forced to climb up a steep hill, as was the tradition for hundreds of years. The ceremony saw the entire Dog Company being awarded with UNSC Marine Corps emblems that featured the famous falcon, shield and globe of the UNSC. After this ceremony, the Marines were permitted to rush down the hill and get to the nearest mess hall for a Warrior's Breakfast where they were permitted to eat anything they wanted and as much as they wanted.

The final week in the boot camp was the least intense one, but the Final Inspection was definitely one of the more intense days of the "Marine Week". Family Day was spent with the Platoon running in their armor and yelling the famous Marine Corps Cadence. John was among those in the very front of the Platoon along with three others and only being behind the flag carrier.

"\_When I die, please bury me deep! Place an MA5 down by my feet! Don't cry for me, don't shed no tear! Just pack my box with PT gear! 'Cuz one early morning 'bout zero five! The ground will rumble, there'll be lightning in the sky! Don't you worry, don't come undone! It's just my ghost on a PT run!\_"

This cadence was repeated many times while the Platoon was on their run as it was the most important in the UNSC Marine Corps. During Family Day, after the run, John met up with his grandparents for the first time in sixty nine days and looked proud at his achievement of becoming a UNSC Marine. He didn't talk much to them, but he did enjoy their presence as he knew that this could be the last day of meeting them before being deployed dozens of light years away from Epsilon Eridani or Sol. The Family Day ended when the families of the Marines left the boot camp and returned back to their homes or planets and the Marines were finally allowed some well deserved rest after enduring so much in the twelve weeks of rigorous combat training.

The final day of boot camp, Graduation, was spent marching across a parade deck from the morning to the afternoon until the Platoon was dismissed by their Senior Drill Instructor. The Platoon was dismissed from boot camp entirely and was immediately rallied up along with the rest of the Dog Company by a UNSC Marine Captain for their new assignment.

''Dog Company, you are assigned to the UNSC Destroyer DD Four Eight Seven ''Aegean Sea'' en-route to the Sargasso System, planet Sargasso. And... I have to be honest with you, kids.'' The Marine sighed as he gathered his thoughts. ''Twenty one year ago, we were attacked by a union of alien species called the ''Covenant Empire''. They've been eradicating our colonies ever since and they've forced our forces back into the Inner Colonies. Earth is in danger, Reach is in danger and every other major colony is in danger, so we must do everything we can to delay them from reaching the major systems until our scientists can develop ways to beat them.'' The Captain looked over Dog Company that consisted of four full size platoons, three of them being made up entirely of men and one being made of women. The Captain decided to mix up these platoons and John was put in the First Platoon along with a female Sergeant named Jessica Mackenzie that had heard of his achievements in boot camp. She was John's Buddy from that moment onwards as they had to look out for each other thanks to the Defense Force's Buddy System.

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><p><strong>Sargasso System, 2546, June 1st, UNSC Aegean Sea's Briefing Room.<br>\*\*All the NCOs of Dog Company along with their Buddies had arrived in the Briefing room for a briefing from Captain Clark â€“ their Marine Captain â€“ along with Lieutenant Miller, their field officer. Jessica, who was promoted to Sergeant, and John, who was a Corporal, were both present in the briefing.

''Alright, Dog Company we're being deployed to the Capital of Sargasso called Sargasso Prime. It's a massive city that's housing millions of Humans and we must not let it fall into the hands of the Covenant before we evacuate the civilians out. We will be reinforced by other elements of the Marines like the 506th Tank Regiment and elements of the UNSC Army like the Army Airborne, but mostly we will be on our own.'' Captain Miller informed them of their situation while looking on a holographic map of the city.

''We will be deployed here, just a klick outside of the city. From there on, we will divide into platoons and then we will divide into fireteams of five Marines each. We have to hold these key areas until reinforcements from Sol can arrive as they're already on their way with a massive Battlegroup, but we have to hold out until then. The current ETA is five hours.'' Lieutenant Miller, First Platoon's CO, briefed while looking over the inexperienced NCOs.

''Questions?''

''No, Sir!'' The NCOs shouted in unison.

''Very well. Report to your units and then down to the hangar. Get ready for an immediate deployment. Dismissed.'' The Captain dismissed the NCOs while he put on a helmet and was getting ready to deploy on the planet with the rest of Dog Company.

First Platoon along was already loaded inside one of the two Pelican dropships and was taking off along with Second Platoon on the other Pelican as they were quickly being transported down to the surface of Sargasso, past all anti-air fire from UNSC and Covenant forces and deployed into a bloody battlefield littered with Human and alien corpses. The Platoons quickly disembarked and executed their plan, dividing into fireteams and entering the city each from their own sector. John was in a fireteam led by Staff Sergeant Maximilian along

with Sergeant Mackenzie, himself, Private First Class Arthur McCloskey and Private First Class Michael Romanenko as his teammates.

John was armed with an M392 DMR and an M6D Magnum along with the standard dark green Marine BDU. Sergeant Mackenzie was carrying a BR55HB SR Battle Rifle along with the same Magnum as John was, while Romanenko and McCloskey were the sniper pair of the fireteam. Romanenko was the one using the SRS-99AM sniper system while McCloskey was using an MA5B rifle. Their leader, Maximilian, was carrying an M247 General Purpose Machine Gun around, just for the heck of putting more bullets into the alien bellies.

"'Alright, team, advance but check your corners once inside the city.'" Maximilian informed over SQUADCOM and the team began moving up without encountering any Covenant forces. They kept advancing until they were inside the more densely populated urban areas covered with tall skyscrapers and civilian pathways above them, but then something really caught their attention.

"'Staff Sergeant!'" John shouted as a crystal projectile went straight through Maximilian's head, instantly killing him. The lifeless body of the Staff Sergeant fell straight down on the ground as the team was forced to split up and head into cover.

"'Sniper! A fucking alien sniper!'" McCloskey cursed over the comms while prepping his MA5B for combat.

"'They're bound to attack us. If we don't get some cover, they're going to pick us off one by one even before their main force arrives.''"

John looked at any possible advantages in the terrain and he noticed a catwalk with good cover along with a not-so-tall skyscraper placed just two hundred meters behind that armored catwalk. He looked at Jessica, who nodded to him, giving him a signal that he can begin relaying his plan.

"'Alright, Romanenko, McCloskey, do you see that tall building three hundred meters to the West?'"

"'Yes, Corporal.''"

"'You two need to take up a position in it and provide sniper rifle. I, along with Jessica, will pick up Maximilian's machine gun under your cover fire and we'll get up that footbridge and get ready to defend this entrance into the city.''"

After John issued his orders to his fellow teammates, he began waiting for them to provide sniper support. McCloskey and Romanenko took their sweet time getting set in a good position on top of a building to provide assistance to their team, but in eight minutes they finally began picking off the alien snipers one by one.

"'You're clear to move up. We've got you covered!'" Romanenko informed the team with his strong Russian accent.

"'Jessica, run up to that catwalk and prepare to open fire on them.''" John prepared to rush for the M247 General Purpose Machine Gun lying

on top of the Staff Sergeant's dead body.

"Alright, butâ€¦ wait, who put you in charge?"

"The situation. Now do it, or get us all killed."

Jessica obeyed John's order and ran up to the footbridge, taking cover behind the protection it offered in the form of metal plating. Meanwhile, John ran as fast as he could, grabbing the machine gun and then running all the way to Jessica's position. Once there, he quickly set up the machine gun and loaded it with a fresh magazine.

"Here they come. Romanenko, McCloskey, keep sniping those bastards." John leaned over his cover to see a platoon of aliens incoming with six being the dino-like aliens called Elites and the rest being what the Marines had nicknamed Jackals and Grunts. John and Jessica allowed the alien platoon to come close into the perfect firing range and leaned out of cover entirely, opening fire from their weapons and unleashing a rain of tungsten and lead on the aliens. Most of them managed to jump behind what nearby cover they could find, but at least ten were killed in the first salvo. John's expert marksmanship, even with a machine gun, allowed him to pick off careless Grunts and Jackals that were hiding behind parked vehicles and concrete blocks. Meanwhile, Jessica decided to throw a frag grenade in the direction of a few Elites. She cooked the grenade for a second until she threw it. It exploded almost instantly after landing near the alien feet, but the aliens weren't killed. Their shields had saved them from the blast, but the blast forced them to seek new cover as a vehicle that they were hiding behind was destroyed.

The Elites popped out of their cover and began firing with their plasma rifles, melting the cover that protected Jessica and John as well as melting away their machine gun from a very lucky shot into the barrel, forcing them to revert to their standard equipment.

John managed to pick off the Elite that had destroyed his machine gun by firing six bullets from his DMR into the Elite's chest, but another Elite managed to shoot him in the leg, melting his ceramic boots away and burning his skin and muscle.

"Ah! Fuck!" John screamed in pain when the scorching hot plasma reached his skin and began burning deep into him.

"John!" Jessica shouted in fear of having yet another teammate dying, but when she tried to lean out of cover, she was pinned back into it by concentrated fire from the aliens. The aliens, however, forgot that there was a Human sniper picking them off and soon the remaining portion of the alien platoon was taken out of existence, only to having a larger force of aliens approach the city.

"Dammit, we won't hold against a company of aliens!" Jessica cursed over the radio when, against all her hopes, a UNSC reconnaissance unit called her.

"Sergeant Mackenzie, this is Eagle Eye One. We've got a Longsword loaded with ASMs en-route to your location, codename: Metal Zero Eight. Paint your target with a target designator and watch the fireworks."

Jessica immediately pulled out a target designator from her backpack and aimed it directly at the incoming company. Actually, she aimed slightly in front of that armored company to compensate for their rapid movement. When the target was painted, she waited for fifteen seconds until a Longsword began its run.

"Ground unit, this is Metal Zero Eight. We're beginning our strafing run. Firing ASMs and firing rotary cannons. Keep your eyes shielded, over." The pilot of the Longsword announced over the radio as he began a low strafing run. The howl of the Longsword's cannons and the firing of the missiles let the team know that the Longsword dropped its entire payload into that company and raised a cloud of ash and dust. When Jessica peeked over her cover, she saw absolutely no movement from the aliens and assumed that it was safe to begin providing medical care to Corporal Sandman. She ran over to him and took his biofoam canister, spraying the biofoam over his wound which was just below the knee and then applying a band over it.

"Ground unit to Eagle Eye One. Can you provide us with an immediate MEDEVAC? We've got one wounded and one KIA, over." Jessica radioed for an evac to get off the planet. Or tried to.

"Eagle Eye One to ground unit, please hold." Silence ensued for several minutes until the reconnaissance unit responded with good news. "Ground unit, we have good news. Yankee One Three is en-route to pick you all up and return you to your ship. Just stay in your position and wait for the dropship to arrive."

"Thank you, Eagle Eye One."

Several minutes after their first skirmish with the aliens, an unarmed Pelican dropship arrived, painted with a big red cross over it in the middle of a white ring. The Pelican landed on the ground and two Marine Corpsmen attended to the dead Staff Sergeant who was lying on the ground right next to the dropship. Meanwhile, Romanenko, McCloskey and Jessica were helping John in getting to the dropship while the Marines were dragging the dead Marine inside.

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><p><strong>UNSC Aegean Sea's medical bay, one day later.<br>\*\*John was slowly recovering from his burn after the doctors had performed a dermal regeneration therapy on him to recover his leg from the plasma burn, after they cooled it off. The doctors had, unbeknownst to any Marine on the Aegean Sea, performed a slight muscle tissue augmentation on John to increase his durability and speed in combat as well as strength to at least be able to do some damage in close combat if needed.

When John woke up, he saw Jessica sitting on a chair right next to his bed.

"Hey, Marine." Jessica greeted John while smiling. She was happy to see that John was alright, despite all the equipment next to his bead saying that he's alright.

"Sarge." John quickly remembered to greet his superior officer, but, apparently, Jessica didn't care about rank.

"'No need for that, Johnâ€| you're a better leader than I am, anyway and our LT has promoted you to Sergeant. We're of equal rank now.''

Jessica picked up a medal from her pocket, remembering that the Lieutenant told her to give it to John.

"'Now, there won't be an official ceremony for this because we have way too many things to do, but, you've been awarded the Purple Heart medal.''

Jessica gave the medal in John's hand. John brought it closer to his eyes and observed his first medal he earned for fighting against the enemies of the UNSC.

Their moment of peace was disturbed when Lieutenant Miller came in the room, searching for the both of them.

"'Good to see you're awake, Sergeant Sandman.''

Miller looked over the two of them, readying his message. "'Sergeants, you've been given a new assignment. You're being transported to Earth for Orbital Drop Shock Trooper training.''

"'Whatâ€|?''

John looked confused when the Lieutenant mentioned ODST training. "'â€| sir, we're just sixteen. How did we qualify for the best of the best?''

"'Central Command of Sargasso was impressed with your performance and leadership qualities. They've stamped you and your teammates as ODST Recruits, so you're now officially being sent to Earth for additional, rigorous training.''

"'Sir, yes Sir!'" John tried to salute while lying on his bed and the Lieutenant saluted back with a smile.

"'Make Humanity proud.''

The Lieutenant announced and left the room, leaving Jessica and John some privacy. Jessica hugged John, trying to find comfort before the harsh training that ODSTs receive as the Shock Troopers are the go-anywhere and fight-anything Marines of the UNSC Marine Corps.

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><p><strong>I wonder if any of you have noticed that I have completely rewritten this chapter to meet new standards and provide additional info of John's early days as a simple child and then, a UNSC Marine. Hope you liked it and, leave a review, as always, with your thoughts.<strong>

## 2. The Fields of Luyten

\*\*Heyo readers, fans and followers, I'm bringing you a fresh chapter of Halo: Shock Troopers featuring two ODSTs and forty Marines holding the line against masses of Covenant footsoldiers to their last breath. I hope you enjoy this. Let the reading begin!

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><p><strong>January 5th, 2549, UNSC Destroyer ''Aegean Sea'', In Slipspace.<br>\*\*John was standing at the bridge of the Aegean Sea with the Captain of the vessel, Russell Crews. He was looking into the black of slipspace with his own eyes, his ODST helmet being held

in his hands.

"We're approaching the Luyten Colony, Captain Crews. ETA Twenty minutes until we drop out of slipspace." The Chief Navigator of the Aegean Sea informed Captain Crews of the estimated time of arrival.

"Roger that. Sergeant Major, prepare to lend a hand to the Luytens. They've suffered hard from the Insurrectionists as they said." The Captain said as he handed a datapad to Sergeant Major John Sandman.

"Yes, sir!" He replied and took the datapad, walking away from the bridge later. In the datapad it was said that three years ago, a few months after the 39th Marine Division left Sargasso, it was glassed and its garrison was utterly wiped out. The Covenant had returned with fearsome force.

He went to the hangar bay of the Aegean Sea to meet up with his girlfriend and a fellow Sergeant Major, Jessica Mackenzie.

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><p><strong>Hangar bay of the UNSC Aegean Sea, 2549, January 5<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 1234 hours by UTC.  
><strong>"Attention all personnel, leaving slipspace in six minutes. Everyone who has been given an order to go down to the planet, report to the hangar bay to your respective commanding officers." The ship's AI, Aphrodite, spoke informing every one of the progress and objectives.

"Our bloodshed on Sargasso was for nothing and we know of this only three years later? What is this bullshit?" John was angered that Sargasso was glassed and he found that out too late. He threw the datapad away, but Jess picked it up and carefully examined the information.

"Look, it's said here that the communications with the planet were down and ONI were investigating and you know how ONI investigates. They keep every piece of valuable information in their databanks, behind thousands of passwords." Jessica said and then placed the datapad on a nearby workbench.

"Yeahâ€| fuck our Intelligence agency. They've been doing more and more strange things." John said as he went to grab his MA5B from inside the Pelican. He began to polish it.

"I wonder what have they been doing?" Jessica asked as she sat down next to John on one of the Pelican's thrusters.

After a while, a platoon grouped in the hangar bay and was waiting for further orders.

"Squad, get your weapons, pack your gear, we're going down to the planet." John issued an order to his squad. Then Jessica did the same.

"We're taking two Pelicans down to the surface to secure the capital and check what sort of damage was dealt to the colony world." John explained to his team as they loaded up in the Pelican dropship to go

down to the planet. While approaching the planet, John noticed a large crater. It looked like a nuke was detonated there and he immediately told the pilot to change course and head for the crater as John wanted to examine it and make sure it's really not what he thinks it might be.

The Pelicans soon landed near the crater, next to a farmer's house. The farmer immediately rushed out of his house with a shotgun to fire on the Marines and ODSTs, but his gun wasn't loaded and when he fired, he remembered he had to load it. While he loaded it, John quickly ran up to him and punched the gun out of his hands and him to the ground.

"Marine, restrain him. Make sure he doesn't shoot at us." John ordered to one of his Marines.

"Copy that." The Marine replied and approached the farmer. He then put on handcuffs on him. "You stay put or we'll have to arrest you, for real." The Marine warned the farmer. He noticed a little girl watching from the window with awe.

"Hey, Smith, there's a little girl. Probably the farmer's daughter. Maybe she'll be more cooperative and tell us what happened here." The Marine who put the cuffs on the farmer said to a fellow Marine.

"You two go ask that kid, don't push her too hard though. Me and Mackenzie will check the crater. The rest of you, guard the dropships." John gave the orders that everyone acknowledged. Two Marines went inside the farmer's house to question the little girl.

"Well, Jess, let's head to the crater." John said and with that, the two went closer to the crater. John pulled out a survey meter for scanning gamma radiation and x-ray waves that are usually emitted by UNSC nuclear bombs that the rebels are using. His meter didn't pick up any radiation which John found strange.

"That's odd. I'm not picking up any radiation." John said as he put his survey meter back among his gear on his armor. He kneeled down and removed his glove. He put his glove-less hand on the ground, feeling slight heat. A lot hotter than any other area of the planet.

"If I know right, the Covenant have the technology to burn something into the ground, plus this crater is barely worth being named crater as it's not even deep. Maybe just a few dozen centimeters below ground level." John said and then got back up, putting his glove back on.

"Hmâ€œ" Jess joined in with the thinking.

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><p><strong>Meanwhile at the farmer's house.<br>\*\*\*'Alright, kid, calm down, please, just calm down. We're not going to harm you.' Corporal Smith tried to calm down the little girl that seemed to be afraid of the Marines in their armor.

"I think she has PTSD. She won't say a thing because she's too

afraid.'' The other Marine said and the Corporal seemed to agree with him.

''Seems likely. Damn, we're wasting time. We're no specialists in taking care of PTSD.'' Smith agreed and said as he wanted to end this as fast as possible.

''Let's just go.'' The other Marine suggested and Smith agreed.

''W-wait!'' The little girl said as she grabbed one of the Marines by his arm.

''I will tell what happened. A large metal monster appeared in the sky, releasing a smaller metal monster. The metal monster landed near home and out of it came strange animals. They took mommy and when the smaller metal monster went back to the bigger one, it spit out red fire and burned our field.'' The girl explained, very slowly. The Marines had to think more to understand what she meant by some words.

''Larger metal monster? Space ship! And since she said it spat out red fire, it's a Covenant space ship that has transport capabilities plus a glassing array. It has to be a CCS-class Battlecruiser.'' Smith said as he looked to his partner.

''She said that they stole her mother. Why?'' The other Marine wanted to find out why this girl's mother was kidnapped.

''Metal monster!'' The girl yelled and pointed at the window. The two Marines went to look through it.

''Oh shitâ€¦ no no no!'' Smith was afraid. The Covenant had arrived and it was definitely a CCS-class Battlecruiser.

''It must've been using the dense concentrations of clouds as cover.'' Smith's partner said after he observed the clouds out of which the battlecruiser came out of.

''Sarge.'' Smith tried to contact Sergeant Major John.

''I see them. Ready weapons, this will get hot.'' John said as he readied his MA5B.

''Defend the farm!'' John gave out an order to his squad.

''Assist Sergeant Major Sandman and his team in protecting the farm!'' Mackenzie issued an order to her squad which now meant that the entire platoon is defending the same area.

''Set up sniper positions in that barn! Get an MG on the first floor of it.'' John issued orders to his special weapons team.

''Here come these bastards!'' John said as he aimed his rifle at a large force of Covenant footsoldiers.

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><p><strong>Meanwhile in orbit around Luyten, UNSC Aegean Sea, January 5<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2549, 1301 hours by UTC.

><strong>The Captain was sitting at his chair, drinking his coffee and eating a piece of chocolate when one of the Ensign's gave shocking news to him.

''Sir, lost contact with our platoon on the surface! We've also received an ID of a CCS-class Battlecruiser.'' The Ensign said and the Captain almost choked on his chocolate.

''Fuck! We need to inform the nearest UNSC patrol of this! Send out a signal, maximum distance is three light years.'' The Captain said and with that a Communications Officer opened a channel.

''Any and all UNSC ships within the radius of this transmission, the Luyten colony is under attack by a Covenant battlecruiser and is in need of immediate assistance. Repeat, Covenant on Luyten colony. They will find out about Earth if assistance won't arrive in the next forty eight hours. Earth is only eight light years from this colony!'' The officer sent the signal immediately and hoped it would reach the nearest patrol in time. The signal's speed was boosted by a working communications satellite above Luyten that the Covenant battlecruiser did not destroy.

''Wait, Epsilon Eridani is just two or a bit more light years from this system. Our signal should get there rather soon and reinforcements should arrive within the next twenty five hours or so.'' The Captain said and he really hoped that what he said turns out to be true. He didn't want to lose his platoon on the ground and his battle-hardened UNSC destroyer.

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><p><strong>Epsilon Eridani System, Planet Reach, 1432 hours by UTC, FLEETCOM headquarters.<br>\*\*It was a casual day at Fleet Command headquarters with high ranking UNSC Naval officers walking around, when suddenly an emergency signal arrived and started broadcasting across the entire building. The Luyten colony was under attack and Reach had the military resources to assist it. A UNSC Rear Admiral, Lower Half, immediately responded by taking a Pelican to his flagship, the UNSC Carrier, UNSC Shoulders of Atlas.

Carrier Group Atlas, which the Rear Admiral commanded, consisted of a single UNSC Carrier, two Marathon-class Heavy Cruisers and seven Paris-class Heavy Frigates plus support craft. The Carrier group immediately left Reach's orbit to head for the Luyten colony which was under attack. Their estimated time of arrival was January 6th, 1540 hours by UTC, just a day of traveling.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Luyten, January 5<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2549, 1454 hours by UTC.

><strong>''Shit, Sarge, we're damn lucky.'' Corporal Smith shouted to the Sergeant Major.

''How so?'' John answered to him.

''The Covies haven't deployed any armor.'' Smith said as he was firing his gun at the advancing Covenant.

''Yeah, I've noticed that too. Maybe they don't have any?'' John

replied but then dismissed his question as nonsense.

"The Covenant usually pack their ships full with armor to support the infantry." Smith said to dismiss John's question.

"Yeah, this doesn't seem right. Anyway, we have to protect this planet from the Covenant. The Capital city is right behind us!" John said as he kept firing his assault rifle.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Aegean Sea, January 5<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2549, 1519 hours by UTC.

><strong>The Captain was getting more and more concerned about the ODSTs and the Marines on the ground since they are the only line of defense between here and Earth. If the Covenant find out about Earth from the local computers, they will strike fast and they will strike hard while Earth's Orbital Defense Grid is still not operational.

"Sir, this is our cargo bay's stock. I think you might find something useful." One of the officers on the bridge said as he handed a datapad to the Captain.

"Food, meds, drinks including alcoholic, munitions, weapons, two M12 Force Application Vehicles, one M808 Main Battle Tankâ€¦ damn!" The Captain said as he gave the datapad back to the officer.

"We need to deliver a drop pod with a message to them. Get us in direct geo sync orbit of their position that we last had a signal from. Maybe they're still there." The Captain ordered and then turned to a few Marines guarding the bridge.

"You three, get those vehicles to the hangar bay and prepare them for transport by Pelicans. Also, get some munitions crates there as well along with food, meds and drinks! We can't let our guys down there die from attrition." He gave the Marines an order.

"Roger that." The Marines acknowledged and immediately headed to the cargo bay. The cargo bay on the Destroyer was connected to the hangar bay with a large hall that can be used to drive a Scorpion Tank through it.

The UNSC Aegean Sea immediately flew over the planet and entered its atmosphere to hide behind its thick clouds, preventing the Covenant radars to pick them up. It launched a drop pod and a minute or so later, it landed right between the two Pelican dropships.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Luyten, 1530 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*A drop pod landed by the two dropships and the pilots ran out to see what was in there. They opened the doors and found a datapad along with a prototype rocket launcher â€" XM41 Surface-to-Surface Rocket Medium Anti-Vehicle/Assault Weapon. This anti-vehicle weapon is more capable than the old M19 Surface-to-Surface Missile Rocket Launcher with increased HEAT rocket speed, damage and penetration along with distance.

"Sergeant Major Mackenzie!" One of the pilots shouted and the

Sergeant Major left her defensive position to approach the pilots.

"'What?'" She said and then went silent as she noticed the pod. One of the pilots handed her a datapad.

"'All Pelicans are to head back up the UNSC Aegean Sea at once. We have packages for you. Also, a SITREP wouldn't hurt. Now get up here ASAP!'" That was the content of the datapad. Nothing else.

"'Get your dropships back up to the destroyer. It has to be directly above us.'" Mackenzie ordered and then took the rocket launcher with her.

"'Holtz, take this AT weapon!'" Mackenzie said as she threw the weapon to him and ran back to her position next to him. The Pelicans then soon took off and went straight up to the Aegean Sea.

As the Pelicans arrived, they noticed there was less space for them to land because of the three extra vehicles. The Pelicans landed nevertheless and the pilots stepped out. The Captain was waiting for them outside.

"'Pilots, what the heck is going on down there?'" The Captain asked with a demanding tone.

"'Sir, a Covenant CCS-class Battlecruiser was hovering right above the planet. It emerged from the clouds and immediately sent out waves of Covenant footsoldiers. Our guys have dug-in well, but without supplies, they won't hold out for too long. Some are already experiencing hunger and lack of ammunition, like our main machine gunner. He was down to his last two magazines of ammunition when we left.'" One of the pilots explained the situation and the Captain understood everything.

"'It's a good thing you managed to arrive, for you are delivering these supplies to our men down there.'" The Captain said as he threw a small box of assault rifle mags to the pilot that he spoke to.

"'Sir, yes sir!'" The pilots acknowledged and began loading in supplies with the help of the Marines that were down in the hangar bay. They continued loading them until the troop bays were stuffed with boxes. The pilots entered the cockpits and sealed the troop bays, beginning the vehicle attachment sequence. When the attachment was complete and the Pelicans returned to the surface, they noticed a burning Capital. The Battlecruiser had moved to destroy the entire city and the platoon was forced to leave their defensive positions and retreat closer to the city, closer to the battlecruiser. The Pelicans still delivered the supplies and vehicles to the platoon, gathering the wounded to transport them back to the UNSC warship.

"'Get those supplies loaded in that warehouse building! Someone man the tank and the Warthog turrets!'" John shouted as he assumed full control of the platoon due to Sergeant Major Jessica getting knocked out by a plasma shot from a Plasma Rod Cannon. The Marines immediately followed his orders. Ten of the forty Marines began loading boxes of supplies into the warehouse that was right next to them. In the warehouse were a couple of surviving civilians plus the

farmer and his daughter who were saved from a burning death.

"The Covenant are pulling back!" One of the Marines shouted out and the rest raised their guns in the air.

"Oorah!" The Marines yelled in unison as the battle had ended. Temporarily.

"Dig in men and set up camp. We'll stay here until we can safely leave this planet." John ordered as he approached Jessica and began to carry her inside the warehouse.

It was beginning to rain outside. It added to that feeling of depression, loss when watching at the burned buildings of the city. John even went up to a skyscraper that was still firmly standing. He looked to the city that once stood proud on this planet, being the capital and housing a population of a hundred thousand humans. Men, women and children all burned except for a few hundred lucky survivors who were either with the UNSC forces holding a small defensive position, or roaming around the city searching for a way to escape this madness.

"Damn those alien scumbags!" John said to himself as he hung his head and raised it twenty seconds later to look high in the sky. He then took off his helmet and dropped it on the roof of the skyscraper he was standing on. He felt that rain hitting against his face.

"Sergeant. Sergeant Major, we have a situation." John heard a Marine talking through the radio in his helmet, so he went closer to pick it up and put it back on his head.

"What's the problem, Marine?" He asked the Marine.

"You'd better see for yourself. Look westward." The Marine said and John then tried looking at the east, but he didn't see anything, so he took binoculars instead.

"The Covenant are grouping everything they have twenty klicks from here! damn. I don't think we'll hold against THAT kind of a force." John said as he looked at the Covenant force, far away. They had finally released tanks, although in smaller numbers than a CCS-class Battlecruiser would carry. Also, the Battlecruiser seemed capable of only firing its energy projector. Strange, it must be low on power or fuel, or something like that." The Sergeant Major observed and remembered that the battlecruiser never fired on the UNSC forces to ensure a swift victory.

"Yes, sir." The Marine replied shortly after. "What should we do, sir?" The Marine asked for further orders.

"Keep resting. I'll get down soon." John replied to the Marine and ended the coms, but kept looking towards the Covenant land forces for a while.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Luyten 726-8 system, January 6<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 1231 hours by UTC.

><strong>A UNSC Prowler left slipspace just beyond the orbit of the

fifth planet of the system, at the closest point to Luyten, just fifty thousand kilometers away, and went straight for Luyten, the colony of this star system and the fourth planet in the system. The vessel had ONI markings on it, instead of UNSC and was using stealth technology. It was one of the fastest ships in ONI's private fleet as it reached Luyten in less than thirty minutes.

The Prowler released a single Pelican dropship with only two occupants in it plus a pilot. The occupants were two SPARTAN-IIIs. Headhunters.

The Pelican reached the surface of the planet on the highest skyscraper, where it released its two passengers.

"Hey, Chris, look down there, a UNSC encampment. Friendlies." John B-201, one of the two SPARTAN-III Headhunters, informed his partner, a fellow SPARTAN-III Headhunter, Chris C-333.

"Affirmative. The message that we heard wasn't lying. Friendlies are fighting off Covenant and we can help them. Let's go, John." Chris said and with that, the two went down to meet the commanding officer.

"Marine, we're looking for your commanding officer." Once they were near a Marine down at the camp, they asked him of their CO. The Marine was shocked to see someone like that sneak up behind him.

"That would be me, Spartan." Sergeant Major John Sandman said as he came out of a corner of the warehouse. "Sergeant Major John Sandman. And you are?" John said as he offered his hand for a handshake. The Spartans accepted.

"My name's Chris C-333 and this here is my fellow Spartan, John B-201." Chris C-333 introduced himself and his partner.

"Glad to meet you, Spartan. We are in dire need of Spartans right now. Do you see that Battlecruiser twenty klicks from here, that way?" John pointed at the western side. The Spartan just nodded in response.

"It has activated an electronic countermeasure system that prevents us from calling in orbital support. We have ordered a Shiva-class nuclear missile's warhead to be delivered down here, in case we fail to protect our mission, but I guess it would be better off to hand it to you, because we need you two to deliver it aboard the Covenant warship." John explained the situation and opened a box with a radiation symbol on it. He pulled out a compact warhead that can be attached to a Spartan's back. He gave it to the Spartan, Chris. The Spartan attached it to his back.

"We'll get it done, you will just have to hold here as long as possible" and I think you will be able to. You've got everything that is necessary ranging from small arms to a Main Battle Tank." Chris explained and disappeared as he activated his experimental cloaking system. John did the same and began following Chris on their new mission " Destroy the CCS-class Battlecruiser to allow the UNSC Destroyer to offer fire support from its oversized Archer missile pods or undercharged MAC shots.

The Covenant suddenly began to move up rapidly. In minutes, they got into their firing range and another bloody battle between the now elite UNSC Platoon and at least four Covenant companies began. One military officer in human history once said that it takes a ratio of ten-to-one to breach a well-defended position. This ratio is elevated to fifteen-to-one because of the tall buildings the Marine platoon was using to install machine gun nests and sniper positions in. Also it was higher because of the near-useless footsoldiers — the Grunts — that got too afraid to fight when their commanding officers were killed.

Regardless of the odds, the Covenant were still pushing forward and got reinforced with everything the CCS-class had left — three hundred more footsoldiers plus twenty vehicles.

The Covenant were still making a firm push to reach the human capital that still had a governmental building not far from the frontline that had working computers with information on the human homeworld.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>En-route to the CCS-class Battlecruiser, 1349 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*John B-201 and Chris C-333 were crossing a large field to reach the Covenant warship hovering a hundred meters above ground level with its gravitation beam deployed. This was the perfect chance for them to get inside the ship.

''There, we're getting closer to the ship.'' Chris said as the gravity beam was only a kilometer from them. John was paying more attention to the battle behind them.

''I don't think our guys will hold for thirty more minutes.'' John said and then Chris put a hand on his shoulder and said:

''We'll get this thing done in twenty minutes and give the signal for them.'' He assured John that they won't fail.

''Let's get moving.'' John said and the two continued to the Battlecruiser with their mission — blow it to kingdom come.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Aegean Sea, In orbit around Luyten, 1355 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*The Captain was observing the battle between the two forces from orbit. He saw plasma being shot at the city and tungsten shells exploding in response. The Covenant were gradually pushing ahead and Captain Crews took a risky step to ensure the UNSC ground force victory. He ordered the two Pelicans to be armed with machine guns and rocket launchers for aerial support. If the Battlecruiser has a fighter escort, it would be deployed to respond to the Pelicans and destroy them, but it was a risk that the Captain was willing to take, since Earth is at stake here and the UNSC wasn't about to abandon a perfectly valuable farming colony just because a single Covenant warship was attacking it without any sign of Covenant reinforcements.

The Pelicans were quickly fitted with armament and munitions and deployed down to the surface. They arrived as quickly as they could to assist the Marines on the surface.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Luyten, 1411 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*The Covenant were almost breaching the lines when the Pelicans arrived and bombed a lot of them to smithereens. This forced the Covenant back and engage in a slugfest instead. They expected their fighters to arrive, but when a loud nuclear bang went off behind them with an explosion brighter than the star, they were shocked and suddenly became disorganized.

''Haha!'' One of the UNSC Marines cheered as he noticed the Covenant warship being disintegrated by the nuclear blast.

''Oorah, Marines!'' John raised his rifle in the air and the rest of the Marines repeated.

''Oorah!'' They shouted as loud as they can, inspiring fear into the remaining Covenant forces. There were less than twenty combat capable Marines left, but they were still inspiring more fear than a fleet of human ships.

The Covenant still kept pushing their advance, but their plasma batteries were running to an end while the UNSC still had some spare machine gun ammo. The Elites, Grunts and Jackals decided to surrender to the humans.

''Weâ€| giveâ€| upâ€| '' One of the Elites yelled out in broken English.

''Get your asses over here, aliens!'' One of the Marines yelled as he raised his half-empty assault rifle at the aliens, aiming it straight at their heads. The aliens slowly approached the humans.

''You scum are in a lot of shit for attacking us. I hope you'll get thrown in a jail to rot for the rest of your pathetic lives!'' Another Marine shouted and then John came closer to the one hundred aliens.

''We're going to need a lot of time to get them cuffed.'' He said, but then his words were proven otherwise when dozens of Pelicans arrived at the surface and several UNSC Heavy Frigates appeared in the atmosphere. The Longswords started sweeping the planet for any other Covenant vessels.

When the Pelicans landed, a Rear Admiral, Lower Half, stepped out and congratulated the Sergeant Major.

''Sergeant Major, you've done a hell of a job. Organizing your men to a near fanatical level so that they protect a planet with all they've got. I noticed that you barely needed our help, just to get these aliens loaded in brigs.'' The Rear Admiral said.

''Sir, yes, sir!'' John replied and stood at attention, albeit, exhausted.

''Take a rest, son. We'll secure the system.'' The Rear Admiral said and with that, about a regiment of Marines was deployed on Luyten to sweep it entirely, search for survivors and establish a garrison in which UNSC Army Troopers would be deployed.

John left for the warehouse in which Sergeant Major Mackenzie was already resting after being knocked out. He lied down right next to her and closed his eyes, falling asleep soon.

In the meantime, the SPARTAN-IIIIs who destroyed the Covenant warship had secretly returned to the ONI Prowler that was holding orbit on the other side of Luyten. The side that didn't have any UNSC warships. Soon after the SPARTAN-III Headhunters were delivered back aboard, the ship set a course away from the system in slipspace.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN-III Headhunters Chris C-333 and John B-201 are property of the fine fellow Chaodixe who is now Toruscan (His new account). They are featured in his story, Dawn of the Spartan. If you wish to read more about them, I suggest you visit Toruscan and read that story. Anyways, the Marines and the two ODSTs held the line long enough for UNSC reinforcements to arrive but a minute longer would've resulted in the UNSC being smashed and Earth to be found. By the way, Chapter 3 of the story will feature a very special appearance. Or multiple ones. ;)<strong>

### 3. Siege of Paris IV

\*\*Welcome to chapter 3 of Halo: Shock Trooper. I spent quite some time thinking on its events, but the battle in it turned out shorter than I imagined. Still, I hope you enjoy the chapter!

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><p><strong>2549, December 20th, Paris System, Paris IV, 0833 hours by Local Winter Time.<br>\*\*Paris IV was a rather advanced, industrial planet that supplied dozens of planets with advanced materials and tools with raw materials being mined in the Paris system. It had a population of seventeen million humans and no one expects a Covenant invasion on this planet soon. No one, but the two ODST Second Lieutenants – John Sandman and Jessica Mackenzie. Paris system was not far from the Covenant front and it is bound to be attacked by the Covenant sooner or later. It was currently a freezing winter on Paris IV.

After the Luyten Incident, the UNSC Aegean Sea was always carrying a detachment of a single UNSC Marine battalion with two ODST companies in that battalion. It also carries two Pelicans in its hangar bay with six M808 ''Scorpion'' Main Battle Tanks, twelve M12 ''Warthog'' Force Application Vehicles in the cargo bay. The Scorpions on the Destroyer were upgraded with 105mm smoothbore high velocity cannons instead of the old 90mm ones that had trouble defeating some Covenant vehicles and the Warthog Light Anti-Aircraft Guns could be swapped out for Gauss cannons for increased anti-vehicle capabilities. The Aegean Sea was also given an escort of two Charon-class Light Frigates to allow it to fulfill a larger variety of tasks. Both frigates had a squadron of GA-TL1 Longsword-class Interceptors each, providing enhanced anti-fighter capabilities to Task Force 12/A-4.

Both Charon-class Heavy Frigates carried a battalion of UNSC Marines

each and roughly two times more vehicles than the Aegean Sea, each. This was a Task Force created by UNSC Fleet Command labeled as Task Force 12/A-4. Its duty is to protect unoccupied planets, engage in covert anti-alien operations, assist main forces in the protection or counter-attacks or any other task the FLEETCOM or HIGHCOM gives them.

ONI's reconnaissance units were covertly spying on a small Covenant Flotilla lead by a Covenant Assault Cruiser in a nearby system that is next to the Paris system. The ships apparently were heading in sub-light speeds for the Paris system. The reason for heading in subspace to that system was because of slipspace jump interference generated by some spatial anomaly that the Covenant didn't care about. Their main goal was to annihilate all humans and uncover every piece of Forerunner technology, without realizing that humans are the key for that technology.

Meanwhile, John and Jessica were preparing to depart the Destroyer via a Pelican dropship that will take the two to the surface to simply take a walk around the planet. When the dropship left, the two were looking out of the Pelican's small window built in its door. They were looking at the fleet protecting Paris IV. The fleet consisted of Task Force 12/A-4 as a support force, two Marathon-class Heavy Cruisers with one of them serving as the command ship of the fleet, one Halcyon-class Light Cruiser, two Destroyers and twenty one frigates of both, the Charon and the Paris-classes. Seeing a Halcyon-class Light Cruiser was rather strange, but also it was good seeing a ship that could withstand unimaginable amounts of punishment and still remain entirely active.

''It's the UNSC Halcyon, the first ship of this class and the first to have been deactivated.'' Jessica told John the name of the Halcyon-class Light Cruiser and why was it named like that.

''I've heard Halcyons could survive little more than ninety percent of their armor blown off and still remain active. As far as I know, it has some sort of honeycomb-type interior that raises its survivability to a whole new level.'' Jessica said and then John began replying.

''Exactly. That unique design helps keep the ship intact and it has increased survivability against energy weaponsâ€œ take plasma as an example. This and the refits the UNSC Halcyon went through make it a formidable foe even for an Assault Carrier on a one-on-one.'' John said and then Jessica wanted to know more about the refits.

''What refits?'' She asked.

''Well, one is a refit on its fusion core. The core generates more power than a standard one mounted on Halcyons. About two and a half times more power and thus this also increases the speed. From what I've heard, it can top out at nine hundred kilometers per second as full speed. Not sure about flank speed, though. Another one is an addition of an upgraded MAC. The coils on it can recharge faster, thus allowing a more rapid rate of fire. Also the addition of more missile pods, extra fifty millimeter guns and a brand new coat of paint.'' John explained and Jessica seemed amazed.

''Why doesn't the UNSC have more ships like that? With these fielded on higher numbers, I think we could force the fight to the Covenant

instead.'' Jessica wondered and then John disrupted her wondering.

''The UNSC considered ships of this type to be too expensive and useless since the conventional frigate was more than enough to beat the shit out of the rebels. A ship with a good crew is not just a ship, it's the ultimate weapon, just like a Marine and his rifle. That's why the UNSC never ordered the construction of the Halcyons in higher numbers, they were too expensive and there was no need for ships like those. Now that the war has come, all of the inactive Halcyons were re-activated. Well, maybe not all, but those who could still be activated for sure.'' John explained to Jessica.

''I see. Some were salvaged for spare parts.'' Jessica understood what John said.

''Landing at the UNSC Garrison in thirty seconds.'' The pilot of the Pelican informed the two ODSTs.

''Roger, open the door.'' John ordered and the pilot opened the door for him to get a better view of the colony. When the Pelican landed, the two left the dropship and its engines were turned off. The ODSTs were met by Sergeant Avery Junior Johnson, a UNSC Marine, loyal to the core and very xenophobic against the aliens.

''Welcome to Paris Four, hope you have a pleasant, alien-less stay here.'' Sergeant Johnson greeted the two ODSTs.

''Sergeant Avery Johnson, I assume?'' John wanted to know if that's really Johnson.

''You got that right. You must be Second Lieutenant Sandman and your girlfriend must be Second Lieutenant Mackenzie. Heard a lot of stories 'bout you two risking your lives in fighting off those alien sons-of-bitches.'' Sergeant Johnson said of his observations about the two.

''Yeah. Me and some forty Marines saved the Luyten Colony from the aliens a few months ago. It was one hell of a fight. Hell, we even took hostages and met two Spartan Headhunters. I've never seen Spartans in person before and my Marines didn't see them before either. Jessica never saw the Spartans since she was knocked out from a plasma explosion.'' John explained one of his achievements to the Sergeant.

''Mhm, sounds interesting. I could tell you my stories that date back way before you were even born, but I guess you won't believe them anyway. Have you got a light?'' Sergeant Johnson asked as he pulled out a Sweet Williams' cigar out of his armor.

''Here.'' John pulled out a lighter out of his ODST chest piece and lit Johnson's cigar.

''Much appreciated, Lieutenant.'' Johnson said as he took a smoke.

''Well, I guess you came to inspect the garrison. Follow me.'' Johnson said and led the two ODSTs on a short tour around the garrison. He gave John a datapad with his career records. Ones that weren't edited by ONI of course and ONI edits quite a lot about some

people.

"These are my battles, in case you get bored sometimes. Read them when you like." Johnson said and John attached the datapad to a magnet on his belt, specifically made for attaching things that don't come with combat equipment.

"Here are our barracks. We house a battalion of Army Infantrymen along with a company of Marines with a total of eight hundred and fifty defenders. The vehicles are in an underground garage, some artillery pieces are on the other side of this base and the command center is that building right there." Johnson pointed at a two story building in which the highest ranking officers resided in starting with the commander of the garrison — a Major of the UNSC Army. Johnson kept showing around the base and introducing with the Army Infantrymen when suddenly Jessica pointed at a Covenant Corvette just four kilometers above ground level.

"Holy shit!" Johnson said as he ran for the nearest alarm button and instead of pushing it, he punched it. An alarm went across the planet, signaling that the Covenant have arrived. The entire garrison began mobilizing and the anti-air assets were the first to be mobilized. Since the Corvette was the only ship spotted, the Aegean Sea immediately descended into the atmosphere and charged up one of its two MAC cannons

"Charge up the MAC cannons and prepare to fire them. Make sure they're undercharged for atmospheric shots, since we don't want to accidentally create multiple megaton blasts that would wipe out our garrison and thousands of civilians." Captain Crews ordered the gunnery officers and warned them to undercharge the MAC. The Aegean Sea arrived and fired its first shot on the Corvette with an impact to the front of the Corvette. The Corvette responded with firing four plasma torpedoes at four different areas of the Destroyer, but the Destroyer's Titanium-A hull plating was holding steady, albeit a bit boiled down. The Destroyer fired its second MAC. The tungsten-depleted uranium shell penetrated the whole of the ship and the shell impacted the engines, exploding there and causing the engines to explode as well, delivering an explosion to the Corvette's core, severely damaging it.

With the massive damage to the core, the Corvette couldn't feed its engines and it began to descend. Luckily for anyone on the ground, the Corvette landed in the sea and began to drown. The entire crew was sunk with the massive ship.

"Oorah!" John, Jessica and Johnson cheered.

"Hooah!" The UNSC Army Infantrymen cheered.

The cheering of the humans was short-lived as the Covenant Fleet left slipspace with an Assault Carrier leading it and two CCS-class Battlecruisers being the main escort ships and fifteen Corvettes in the formation.

"Oh, hell no. The Covenant have found this peaceful world too!" The Vice Admiral of the fleet over Paris IV cursed over the COM as the Covenant arrived.

"Fucking bullshit!" One of the Army Infantrymen said after hearing

what the Vice Admiral said.

"'Alright ladies, get your gear on and prepare to fight! The Navy's saying the Covenant have deployed dropships to fuck us up. We won't let them do that, now will we?'" The commanding officer of the garrison came out of the command building and informed the battalion of the situation.

"'No, sir!'" The entire battalion said in unison and ran for their weapons and armor.

"'Lieutenants, I hope more ground units will be coming, because the Covenant have deployed a division-sized invasion force to the ground.'" The Major approached the ODST officers.

"'Hold on.'" Jessica said and then tuned to contact the UNSC Aegean Sea.

"'Captain, we'll need every UNSC Marine and ODST aboard the ships of the task force on the ground. Keep a detachment to protect the ships from boarding parties, but give us backup. The Covenant are attacking with sheer numbers.'" Jessica sent a message to Captain Crews and Task Force 12/A-4 began to land on the surface, releasing its regiment sized Marine force and vehicles to support the defense of Paris IV.

"'Assume defensive positions! Move your asses!'" The Major assumed command of the Joint Force Regiment that now had four battalions of combat able humans — men and women of the UNSC's Marine Corps and the UNSC's Army.

John took his company, Dog Company, and he set an objective for them — reach the nearest metropolis. Jessica took her company, Bravo Company, and assisted John in reaching the city while the main force, the Joint Force Regiment, was establishing a front.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>30 minutes later, 0921 hours by Local Winter Time, Paris IV.<strong>

>The snow seemed to cause trouble for the Covenant as they were not ready for fighting humans in the winter, while humans were more than ready for the winter. The human Marines and Army Infantrymen were wearing winter gear, almost the same old armor worn by the two branches, but only colored in white and better suited for the cold of winter when temperatures fall below zero degrees per Celsius.<p>

Dog and Charlie companies were entering the nearest metropolis to the garrison which was only five kilometers from it. The city's name was New Lyon and it was one of the most densely populated cities of the planet with a population just over three million. It had a large Magnetically Levitated train station at the center of it, just past a river that divided the city in two parts - the Northern City also known as the City Center and the Southern City. It was the point at which many civilians that did not get out of the city in time gathered.

"'Alright Marines, get your asses off the Scorpions and Warthogs. We've got to secure the buildings ahead, since the Covenant might be hiding in there with their anti-vehicle plasma cannons.'" John

ordered to his Marines as they got off the vehicles and began spreading out to secure the buildings in the Southern City.

''Patching into the currently active satellites directly above us.'' One of Dog Company's tech experts said as he was accessing a satellite to run a life sign scan on the entire city.

''Sir, no Covenant detected in the Southern City, but there is a massive concentration of life signs in the Central Train Station. By massive I mean at least a few ten thousand humans stuck in there by a few hundred Covenant storming the place.'' The technical expert informed the Lieutenant of his findings and closed the program on his TACPAD.

''Then that's where we're going now.'' John said as he gave a wave with his hand for the vehicles to move up. The Marines jumped on the vehicles and at full speed, the column headed straight for the train station. Jessica, not knowing of John's plans and being a few streets away from him, decided to order the Marines to dig in just next to the river.

While Jessica and her company was digging in, John began to open up an entrance to the train station by punching through the Covenant lines with brute force from the tanks. The Covenant were surprised to see a human military group attack, especially now, when the entire UNSC military force on the planet is stretched thin in protecting its garrisons. Utilizing the element of surprise and brute attack force resulted in a swift breakthrough, straight past the Covenant lines. John's company encircled and exterminated the Covenant that were blocking their pass and also they cleared the Western entrance for the train station, allowing the UNSC Marines to enter the train station.

''Delta team, follow me. The rest of the Company must secure the perimeter of the station. Got it?'' John gave orders before entering the train station.

''Oorah!'' The Marines responded and John, with Delta team, went inside the train station. Once he and the Marines entered with him in front, they saw horrible things.

There were human bodies everywhere in a pool of red blood. Human blood. Some humans were missing limbs, some heads, and some were violently tore open and even missing some organs like the heart or lungs, kidneys and so on. When the Marines went further, they saw the smallest Covenant creatures â€“ Grunts â€“ eating human flesh. John was disgusted and forced in a state of rage.

''Rah! You motherfuckers!'' He yelled as he unleashed a storm of lead upon the unsuspecting Grunts, murdering a lot of them. The Marines join in and they fired on the rest of the Grunts, cleaning out the train station.

''Youâ€| sickâ€| bastards!'' John shouted at the dead Grunts. He even continued to shoot some of them.

''Sir!'' One of the Marines put a hand on John's shoulder, seemingly awakening him from his state of rage. John noticed a girl trying to speak with whatever strength she had left. She was the one the Grunts

were eating. Alive. John leaned closer to hear what she had to say.

"'Shootâ€| m-meâ€|'" She said, barely with any voice and out of pity, to end her suffering, John primed his M6C pistol and pointed it at her head.

"'Rest in peace.'" John said right before releasing a bullet in the girl's head. He released another round to make sure that she doesn't suffer the pain that the Covenant gave her.

"'Goddamn alien bastards.'" John said and kicked one of the aliens away from his route. He and his Marines were heading lower into the underground levels of the station while most of Dog Company was securing the outer perimeter of the train station.

"'Hello?! Anyone down here?'" John shouted out in hopes to receive a voice from a human. His hopes were not in vain as dozens of civilians appeared.

"'Thank God! The UNSC has come to save us!'" Many civilians said.

"'Did you see my daughter? She was up there andâ€|'" One of the elderly civilians said as he was very nervous, but John didn't want to reveal the truth of what happened to her, so he covered it with a lie.

"'Your daughter was shot by multiple plasma bursts. Her body was burntâ€| it wasn't pretty.'" John lied, as he noticed a girl that was being eaten alive by Grunts. He completed her wish by sparing her from the pain.

"'Oh no!'" The elderly human went away crying. John could feel his pain.

"'What are we going to do?'" One of the civilians asked.

"'You will load up in the MagLev trains and head for the nearest spaceport. We'll cover your departure. We don't have much time, because the Navy can't keep getting its ass handed to it by the Covenant, so we have to do this quick otherwise your only window of getting off this planet safely will seal tight.'" John said and the civilians began running towards the MagLev trains that were behind them.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Orbit of Paris IV, 0949 hours by Local Winter Time.<br>\*\*The Navy was really getting its ass handed to it as the Covenant was pushing hard on it, destroying frigate after frigate, but the human fleet was still putting up a fearsome fight engaging in head-spinning maneuvers that the Covenant couldn't respond to, due to their massive ships that were surprisingly less maneuverable than their UNSC counterparts.

The command ship, a Marathon-class Heavy Cruiser, engaged in a maneuver that placed it right between the two CCS-class Battlecruisers. It, unknowingly to the Covenant, deployed two Shiva-class nuclear missiles between them and immediately, at flank

speed, left the area to avoid getting shot. After retreating back between the UNSC's ships, the nukes detonated, lowering the shields of the two Covenant heavies allowing the fleet to fire MAC shells on them and quickly take them out.

Task Force 12/A-4 was among one of those that fired on the Battlecruisers. Now what was causing trouble for the humans was the Assault Carrier and the rest of the Covenant ships.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Spaceport 3A-1, outskirts of New Lyon, 1000 hours by Local Winter Time, December 21st, 2549.

><strong>Sergeant Johnson and a few of his Marines were holding their ground at Spaceport 3/A-1 per the Major's orders. There was a flooding of thousands of civilians loading up in civilian space ships that were ready to take off any moment. The Sergeant and his men had stolen a few crates of Plasma grenades from the Covenant while they were heading towards the space port. These grenades were being used to blow the Covenant away, in case they got too close.

The Covenant were pushing with increasing strength against Johnson and his team and he even thought that at one point, the Covenant would just wipe them all out, but then, suddenly, an ONI Prowler crashed directly on top of the Covenant.

''God damnâ€| ONI sure knows when to land its ass on the field.'' Sergeant Johnson commented as he released an empty clip from his MA5B and put in a fresh clip in. He took his binoculars and looked at the ONI Prowler, seeing a hatch open and two heavily armored humans step out. Those were SPARTAN-IIIs. They seemed to clean their armor from the dust and even looked at the ship, seeing Covenant blood, brains and guts all over the side of the Prowler.

''Damnâ€| that Covenant force has just been turned into the chow that gets poured in our everyday meals back in the garrison.'' Johnson commented yet again and lowered his binoculars as he saw the SPARTAN-IIIs coming his way.

''Johnson, we're Oscar Mike from the Northwest. Be ready to create a base of fire in that direction. The Covenant are hot on our six!'' Lieutenant John signaled Johnson to be ready to fight a Covenant force. John was pulling back with Jessica and her company.

After a few minutes, the two Marine companies and their two ODST Lieutenants arrived at the spaceport. John hopped off a Warthog to observe the two SPARTANS. Those were the same ones that he met on Luyten.

''John. Chris.'' John Sandman said while slowly approaching the Spartans.

''Sergeant Sandman.'' John B-201 greeted the Lieutenant.

''It's Second Lieutenant now, Spartan.'' John corrected the Spartan.

''I see. It's still good to see you again.'' B-201 said as he turned around to look at the attacking Covenant. Suddenly, a communications signal was sent to the units at Spaceport 3/A-1 from the

Fleet.

"All units, I am initiating Emergency Priority Order Zero Nine Nine Eight Eight Three One A Dash One. I repeat, Cole Protocol is taking effect. All ships are to jump in random directions and then regroup at Reach or Earth, after making sure that no Covenant ship has been pursuing them." The Vice Admiral issued the Emergency Priority Order because the Covenant had dialed for backup and with that, the retreat from Paris IV began. What's left of the hammered UNSC fleet began pulling UNSC Marines and Army Infantrymen out of the planet. Most of the civilian ships were long gone by now.

The UNSC Aegean Sea began descending towards Spaceport 3/A-1 to get its men aboard plus the extras like Johnson, his Marines and the two Spartans. Three GA-TL1 Interceptors were covering it from any pesky Covenant attack craft that might try to attack it while the Marines were loading aboard.

Shortly after all the units were finished loading in the destroyer, it closed the hangar and departed the planet at maximum speed, but not before meeting up with the two Charon-class Frigates that were waiting for it in orbit. Once it met up with the frigates, they opened slipspace portals through which they departed the system heading for a random direction in deep space. Most of the crew, including John and Jessica, went to the cryobays to begin cryogenic sleep. Some members of the crew like the Captain and his bridge officers remained awake to correct the course if needed. The Spartans didn't go to sleep as well, they stayed awake.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Ten days later, 7 Light-years from Earth, 3 Light-years from Reach, Interstellar Space, 0455 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*Task Force 12/A-4 left slipspace at their preset coordinates, twenty light-years from the Paris system, they decided to travel to Epsilon Eridani. The three ships put in the coordinates in their navigational computers.

Captain Crews ordered a thorough scanning of the immediate area the Task Force was in. His order was to scan for any signs of Covenant activity. When the scan was complete, the crew of all three ships could release their breaths as the Covenant were nowhere to be found. No slipspace anomalies, no Covenant vessels or plasma discharges. The Task Force could easily continue their route towards Reach â€“ UNSC's military powerhouse.

"I'm glad that's over with." Tanya, an AI from the ONI Prowler, chimed in Chris' helmet as she was being stored in it.

"I'm glad that you finally woke up, Tanya." Chris expressed his happiness for the AI that "imitated" to be asleep or dead.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>One day later, Epsilon Eridani System, Csodaszarvas's orbit, 2135 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*A small detachment of Epsilon Eridani's Fleet was patrolling Csodaszarvas, one of Reach's moons with the other being Turul, when three slipspace portals opened up and out of them came three UNSC warships, two frigates and a heavy

destroyer. The IFF beacons confirmed them as Task Force 12/A-4 and the Defense Fleet's fragment immediately escorted them to the nearest shipyards to begin repairs, while ONI arrived on a Prowler to dock with the UNSC Aegean Sea and take what belonged to them â€“ the Spartan Headhunters. ONI also requested reports of the battle from everyone who took part in it. They paid special attention to Sergeant Avery Junior Johnson as they put a lot of ink on his report.

Slowly, the Task Force continued their movement towards Reach when the ONI Prowlers left them. They looked at the massive military powerhouse that some already know. Some, like John and Jessica, since they trained there. There were about twenty Super Magnetic Accelerator Cannon platforms protecting the planet. These Super MACs are enough to make a Covenant Supercarrier's crew drop some sweat, since they propel their shells at massive speeds and upon impact, they release enough energy to violently punch through a vessel, causing serious damage that many ships can't withstand. If a shield does block the shell, it's energy is still enough to disintegrate the ship.

The Siege of Paris IV was a short, but bloody battle for the UNSC. Less than half of the civilians were evacuated from the planet, ninety percent of the Paris IV's garrison was wiped out and the UNSC Navy was left with a badly beaten Paris Defense Fleet that was now merged with Epsilon Eridani's Fleet, except for Task Force 12/A-4 which operates under the direct command of FLEETCOM. While FLEETCOM was looking for an appropriate task to give the Task Force, the crew of the force enjoyed some rest and relaxation on Reach - one of the most developed UNSC colonies.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>So, I hope you liked this chapter. The Siege of Paris IV turned out to be a bit shorter than I expected, but what's a siege in a war against the Covenant? When the human fleet is turned to hammered shit, the Covenant can just begin turning everything to glass from orbit.<br>The SPARTAN-III Headhunters Chris C-333 and John B-201 along with the Smart AI Tanya are property of Toruscan. It was his idea to add these three characters into this story and I think it's for the best since they have almost no backstory in his ''Dawn Of The Spartan'' fanfic, except for the Fall of Reach.\*\*

#### 4. An Unexpected Ally

\*\*Hello and welcome to another chapter of Halo: Shock Troopers. This chapter will bring you readers an unexpected turn of events when something happens onboard a Covenant vessel. Enjoy!  
><strong>

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Ballast, Ballast System, 2552, January 5th, 1144 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*Ballast was a wild colony world, one of the more distant Inner Colonies governed by the Unified Earth Government. It was a colony world filled with forests, jungles and many other things that reminded it of ancient Earth. It also had a rather long day night cycle. Forty five eight hours, or two Earth days. The planet was also in fourth orbit around its parent star, Ballast Prime. An average temperature on the planet was around twenty five degrees per Celsius.

The colony world was invaded by a large Covenant attack force, counting in the thousands of footsoldiers and at least a dozen vessels that were being fought by dozens of UNSC ships of a joint fleet.

A large UNSC armored column was headed down an open field in a spearhead formation. The column was commanded by two ODST officers and two Marine non-commissioned officers. Second Lieutenant's John Sandman and Jessica Mackenzie, Staff Sergeant's Parisa and Avery Johnson â€“ these were the reinforcements intended to relieve a UNSC battalion holed up in a farmer's territory and under heavy fire. The column also had SPARTAN-III Headhunters given to them by ONI. The column consisted of eight M808 ''Scorpion'' Main Battle Tanks, sixteen M12 ''Warthog'' Force Application Vehicles with a wide variety of armament and twelve Behemoth-class Troop Transports. The column reached a river that was almost as big as the Volga river on Earth and this provided some trouble for the UNSC as the Covenant could be entrenched on the other side and there were only two bridges nearby.

''Sniper team, report!'' John shouted while standing on the hull of an M808 Tank. A Sniper team of two arrived immediately to hear what John has to order them.

''I want you two to take the furthermost bridge, cross it, and check for any hostiles on the other side. Alright?'' John issued the order and the snipers saluted. Shortly after, they ran towards their target â€“ the more distant bridge.

''I hope we don't meet any Covenant yet. When we landed, we met them already and lost a lot of good men to them, but now I just don't want to see them.'' John said to Jessica as he was looking at the snipers through his binoculars.

''Maybe we'll be lucky enough not to meet them, eh?'' Jessica responded as she was leaning against the turret of the tank and looking at John.

''Yeah.'' John responded as he kept looking at the snipers.

The two SPARTAN-III Headhunters got tired of waiting, so they decided to jump out of their troop transport and head to talk to John.

''I am sure the reasons for stopping near a river are justified.'' Tanya, the AI in Chris's helmet, said to him. Chris, aching for some action, wanted to know if these reasons are really justified, or if its overcaution from the commanding officers.

''Sandman, why did we stop?'' John B-201 asked to the Second Lieutenant.

''We had to. My guts tell me there is a Covenant force on the other side of the river and if they are there and armed with artillery, we can't risk taking the bridges.'' John replied to the Spartan.

''Ohâ€| wait, we weren't given an Engineer detachment?'' Chris asked.

''Negative, apparently command felt like there would be no trouble,

so I have to play it safe, otherwise we won't reinforce those stranded Marines.'' John replied and unknowingly calmed Chris down.

''See? I told you, Chris. The reasons behind this were backed by facts and a feeling in the guts. Your guts also speak to you, don't they?'' Tanya said as she was trying to become playful with Chris.

''Yes, they do, butâ€¦ never mind.'' Chris replied and looked at the other side of the coast when suddenly, he could hear a very faint noise of a plasma shell being fired.

''Everyone, get the hell back!'' He shouted out and the drivers pulled their vehicles back.

''Here we go. Get out of the transports, First and Second Platoons create a base of fire on the other side of the coast. Force them to keep their heads in cover. Third and Fourth are to follow me, we're going to take the more distant bridge and take a risk. Execute!'' John said and with that ran with two platoons towards the sniper team that was either dead or in cover, since John didn't look at them for the last minute.

''I guess we'll have to follow him.'' John B-201 said and then Tanya began speaking to him as well.

''Exactly, go Spartan, help the Marines.'' Tanya replied and John, along with Chris, ran to help the Marines and their ODST Lieutenant.

Meanwhile on a tree not far from the more distant bridge, the two snipers were carefully picking their targets and they spotted an Elite Zealot.

''I've spotted a Zealot.'' One of the snipers said and the other one immediately tried to locate him.

''Where?'' He failed to locate the Zealot and asked for help.

''The one with two swords in his hand, wearing yellow armor. He's at least a hundred meters behind the enemy position.'' The first sniper said and the second sniper immediately looked that way, seeing the enemy officer.

''Shall we eliminate him?'' The second sniper asked.

''We need clearance from the officers. We can kill him, if they don't want to take him hostage.'' The first sniper said and contacted Second Lieutenant John on his helmet's communicator.

''Sir, we've spotted a Zealot. Shall we kill him?'' The sniper asked for clearance, but John took a while to think about it.

''Negative Hunter One-One. Avoid killing the Zealot. We need him alive!'' John responded and the snipers then decided not to open fire at all, just provide assistance when really needed.

''That was a rather strange choice, don't you think, Lieutenant?'' John B-201 asked the ODST.

''I think so as well, but if we interrogate him, we might get some critical information out of him, like, Covenant Navy's size, weaknesses of every ship and things like that, do you understand? It's critical for the survival of humanity.'' Lieutenant Sandman explained his order to the Spartan.

''I understand now, shall you send us to take him prisoner?'' John B-201 asked and then Chris joined in, the two staring into the Lieutenant's ODST helmet.

''Go. Take him prisoner. You are authorized to shoot him in the leg or arm, but try not to kill him, alright?'' John said and the two Spartans departed for the woods to gain the element of surprise.

''Well, that is a good idea, if you know Sangheili language.'' Tanya said in communications to the two Spartans that are now sneaking in the forest.

''He'll have to learn English now, otherwise he'll suffer, like he made humans suffer. I've also seen the report Second Lieutenant Sandman made on Paris IV. Grunts feasting on humansâ€œ the Covenant are full of psychopathic maniacs!'' Chris said to Tanya while John was sneaking a bit ahead of him.

''I've read it too, Chris and I'm not surprised. They're on a genocidal holy war against humanity and it's not surprising that the smaller ones would eat humans.'' Tanya told Chris her thoughts.

''Or maybe they're not being fed well enough.'' Chris suggested a possibility that seemed to be very logical since sometimes things like that are forced from hunger.

''Very possible. If we take the Siege of Leningrad from World War Two as an example, humans formed groups and then attacked fellow humans to eat them. Engage in cannibalism.'' Tanya seemed to agree with Chris's suggested possibility.

''You sure know something about historyâ€œ'' Chris seemed surprised to know that an AI created to learn about aliens, knows the details of a human battle.

''All Smart AIs must know human history to assist humans in combating the alien threat. Some things out of history can actually help, you know?'' Tanya said to Chris to cease his surprise.

''Chris, sound off. The Zealot might hear us!'' John signaled to Chris in a whisper through communications. Chris didn't reply, a sign that he understood what John meant. Slowly, John approached the Sangheili Zealot from behind and knocked him out. Chris came in and put on handcuffs that are able to hold Sangheili.

''We got him. Now to slip back out undetected.'' Chris said to John and then heard a Grunt shouting.

''Demons! Demons! Fire!'' The small Grunt yelled and a large part of the Covenant company began firing on the Spartans.

''I'll get the Zealot. Get back to the Lieutenant!'' Chris ordered to

his Spartan partner, who obeyed and ran back to Lieutenant Sandman as fast as he could.

"Are you sure this is such a good idea, Chris?" Tanya asked Chris, being unsure if even a Spartan would survive such sustained fire.

"Obviously you haven't seen Spartans in real action." Chris said as he threw the Zealot over his shoulder and began running in zigzags to avoid incoming Covenant plasma shots.

Meanwhile, John B-201 had arrived at Lieutenant Sandman's position.

"Sir, I need your platoon to create a base of fire to the Northeast." John B-201 asked for Sandman's platoon's assistance.

"What for?" Lieutenant Sandman asked.

"Chris C-333 is running from the Covenant with a Zealot on his shoulder and he will lure them here if we don't respond immediately. As I see, none of your men are looking to the Northeast. The platoon might get crushed!" John convinced the Lieutenant.

"Third Platoon, get ready to create a base of fire to the Northeast. Fourth, keep firing to the East." John issued a new order for the Third Platoon and all their rifles were immediately aimed to the Northeast. The Marines reloaded their rifles and anticipated an enemy. Then, they noticed the Spartan Headhunter running in zigzags and saw blue plasma fly everywhere in a spread.

"Kill those bastards! Save our Spartan." John ordered and the Marines unleashed a brutal rain of lead upon the advancing Covenant platoon while Chris was still running in zigzags to avoid incoming fire. When nearing the Marine platoon, he made a high jump to avoid getting shot and landed in cover.

"There's our POW." Chris said as he threw the Zealot on the ground.

"Captain Crews, requesting air assistance six kilometers South from our objective." Second Lieutenant John Sandman tried getting some GA-TL1 Longswords to bomb the hell out of the Covenant.

"You're lucky at this moment, Lieutenant. I've got two Longswords to spare and they're heading your way. Get ready for some fine fireworks." Captain Crews replied and John looked up in the air to find the Longswords.

"Lieutenant Sandman? This is Thomas Lasky. I'll be your Santa Claus today, prepare to be gifted Covenant barbecue." The pilot of one of the two UNSC Longswords said cheerfully.

The Longswords passed by with incredible speed, but they fired their 120mm ventral guns on their pass, killing most, if not all, the Covenant that were holding the UNSC column back from their objective. Now that the Covenant resistance was mitigated, the column proceeded to their objective by first crossing the two bridges and then heading North.

John came closer to observe the captive Zealot when he slowly awoke from being unconscious.

''Filth! Release me!'' The Zealot yelled in clear English demanding his immediate release.

''Feistyâ€| for an split-chinned lizard bastard.'' Staff Sergeant Johnson approached with a Sweet Williams' cigar lit and in his hand. He approached the Zealot and kneeled down right next to him. ''Say, ye all mighty and holy bastard, why are you fighting against us?'' Johnson asked the Zealot.

''We fight you, because you are filth that must be exterminated! Filth that is a walking plague, a mere obstacle before our Great Journey that must be exterminated!'' The Zealot exclaimed, denouncing the human race as impure.

''Yeah, yeah and the bad ol' filth just wiped the floor with your squishy Covenant bastards.'' Johnson said as he took a smoke from his cigar and got up.

''What're we going to do with him?'' He asked Lieutenant John.

''We're going to carry him around and then throw him in the brig on the Aegean Sea once we beat the Covenant out of this system.'' John replied to Sergeant Johnson.

''You hear that, split-chin bastard?'' Johnson lightly kicked the Zealot. ''You're going to be our captive and we'll show you how filthy we really are.'' He finished and took another smoke from his cigar. The Zealot simply grunted and turned his head away.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Covenant CCS-class Battlecruiser in orbit around Ballast fighting the UNSC, 2552, 1506 hours by UTC, Brig A.<br>\*\*A Sangheili Major was being dragged into the brig by two other Sangheili, one being an engineering officer, a fellow Major, and the other being a simple guard, a Minor. The dragged Sangheili was being stripped of his armor and thrown in a cell which was then sealed by a powerful energy barrier.

''You should think twice than to commit to heresy and think thrice before spreading it around, fool!'' The engineering officer exclaimed to the jailed Sangheili.

''You do not understand! The Prophets have lied to us all these years! The humans are not the ones who are unfit for joining us, it's the Prophets! Those lying-'' The jailed Sangheili tried convincing his fellow officer.

''Enough of your filthy lies, you human sympathizer! If you wish to join the humans, then so be it! Your trial will await once we cleanse this system of these impure humans!'' The Major said, but then felt the ship shaking and could hear a massive explosion, likely caused by a human Magnetic Accelerator Cannon.

''Sir! The humans made a direct hit on one of our plasma projectors

while we were trying to fire! They might've found out our shielding's flaws!'' A Sangheili Minor said as he appeared behind a door.

''I'll be right there, brother.'' The Major said and left.

Soon after, a sudden power surge occurred all around the ship, likely caused by a detonation of a human nuclear weapon next to the ship. The jailed Major took this opportunity to sneak out of his cell and knock out the Minor that was guarding him.

''May you find peace, wherever you go, brother.'' The Major said as he put on his armor and then took an energy sword. He activated it and stabbed the unconscious Minor.

''I must find a way off this ship.'' The Sangheili Major said to himself as he began running across the ship, seeing a sight of the ship suffering from massive damage dealt by humans.

''If this was a human coilgun round right here, we'd be dead by now.'' One Sangheili Minor said to another, observing a human Archer missile that did not detonate, but rather penetrated the hull of the CCS-class Battlecruiser. The Minors then noticed a small light blinking.

''What's that?'' The other Minor said.

''I think it means tha-'' The first Minor attempted to speak his mind, but then the Archer missile detonated, dealing heavy damage and killing the nearby Sangheili. Apparently it was set to penetrate and detonate. The Sangheili Major that was trying to escape when he looked out a window and saw a human destroyer-type ship passing slowly by, clearly seeing its name ''Aegean Sea'', firing its 50mm guns and missiles at the CCS-class Battlecruiser and noticed plasma torpedoes being fired at it. Two human light frigates were escorting it and firing MAC rounds at the Covenant vessels.

''I have to help the humans out!'' The Major thought in his mind and immediately went to a nearby elevator to reach the weapon control area. It took a small amount of time to get there, but when he got there, he activated his energy sword.

''I am sorry, brothers.'' The Sangheili seemed really determined to help the humans, since the Prophets had lied to his race, that the humans are unfit for the Great Journey, filth and so on.

The Major lashed out and attacked every Sangheili operating the weapons.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Aegean Sea, Bridge, 1533 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*The ship was under moderate fire from the barely functioning guns of the heavily battered CCS-class Battlecruiser when suddenly they stopped firing entirely.

''Captain, the Battlecruiser stopped firing!'' One of the Bridge Officers informed the Captain of the developing situation.

''What? How? Did they overheat?'' Captain Crews wanted an answer as to why the guns stopped firing so suddenly.

''Scans show that their guns could sustain fire for a few more hours, overheating is unlikely. Perhaps sabotage from within?'' An AI appeared on a holo tube, explaining the scans to the Captain.

''Did ONI get humans aboard a ship filled with aliens?'' Captain Crews asked yet again.

''Unlikely. Even ONI cannot get humans aboard a Covenant ship, no matter how well they hide their operations.'' Another bridge officer spoke his mind as he kept doing his job aboard the ship.

''Whatever that was, they just bought us some extra durability against the Assault Carrier.'' Captain Crews said as he looked on the ship's radar. The UNSC ships were firing MACs before merging in with the battered Covenant vessels. The heavier ships stayed in line to provide MAC support, but the rest moved in to fire broadsides on the Covenant.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Aboard the CCS-class Battlecruiser, Shuttle bay.<br>\*\*The Covenant aboard the Battlecruiser were determined to go down with the ship, but not the Sangheili Major that was looking for a Phantom and when he found an unoccupied one, he immediately started it up and departed the ship, though found himself under fire from human point-defense weapons. He tried the impossible, breach through the point-defense fire of the Destroyer and land on it.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Aegean Sea, 1539 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*''Sir, a Covenant dropship is attempting to land in our shuttle bay!'' An officer exclaimed as he was looking at the radar and then ran to the Captain.

''Shoot it down!'' The Captain ordered.

''I'm trying, Captain, but it seems he is determinedâ€| waitâ€| he just landed.'' The AI said.

''Get a Marine team down there immediately! Restrain him if possible!'' The Captain exclaimed loudly.

''Affirmativeâ€|'' The AI disappeared for a few seconds and then reappeared. ''A team of ODSTs is en-route to the shuttle bay.'' The AI said.

Meanwhile in the shuttle bay, out of the shuttle came the Sangheili Major. He felt minor concussion, but then he gathered himself.

''Urghâ€|'' He was still feeling awful, but he tried to reach an elevator when he noticed that it came down and out of it came five human shock troopers. The Sangheili Major fell to the ground unconscious even though he thought that he could hold it.

''Damn, I guess we're not seeing any action in the near future.'' The ODST said.

''Shut up.'' The leader, a Corporal, said and then contacted the Captain.

''Captain, one Elite came out and fell unconscious. Apparently he landed too roughly. I'm sending two of my guys to inspect the Phantom now. Orders on what should we do with the Elite?'' The Corporal asked for further orders.

''Get him to sick bay, but restrain him and keep him under watch! Looks like we'll get two Elites at the price of one.'' The Captain ordered and was even a bit cheerful as he could get a lot of credit in the UNSC Navy for having a Covenant captive, or two, in this case.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Ballast, 1653 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*The UNSC's reinforcements had helped the stranded battalion beat back the Covenant's desperate counter-attack and even helped move further, forcing them back into their landing area, where they were surrounded by multiple UNSC Marine and Army battalions.

''Reports are coming in from all over the planet, sir. The Covenant are being beaten at their landing sites. This battle is a victory!'' Staff Sergeant Parisa was cheering as she has seen many horrors of this war. Her biggest loss being the glassing of Eridanus II â€“ her homeworld.

''Damn right this is a victory, or did we really wish to lose today?'' Staff Sergeant Johnson asked as he was firing his MA5B at the Covenant in their landing zone.

''I think that was the last Covenant and I got him.'' Lieutenant John said as he put in a new mag in his battle rifle as he then holstered it behind his back.

''Captain Crews, requesting extraction at Covenant Landing Zone Charlie One, over.'' Second Lieutenant Sandman asked and was happy to hear a positive response.

''Copy that, Lieutenant. We're en route. Get your men ready.'' The Captain responded.

''Roger that, sir.'' John acknowledged.

''I don't know about you, guys, but I'll be getting a shower once we're in the ship. Unless the Covenant blew our water reserves awayâ€| or something worse, like blew open a wire in the ship that did something to the water supplyâ€|'' Second Lieutenant Mackenzie spoke of a shower and she was on coms, though she did realize that.

''Everything is fine with the water reserves, Lieutenant Mackenzie. Your shower will be hot when you get there.'' One of the officers aboard the Aegean Sea said.

''There's our ride.'' Staff Sergeant Johnson said as he pointed at the inbound destroyer.

''Hey look, it dropped out a Covenant ride.'' Jessica Mackenzie

pointed at a Phantom flying out of the Aegean Sea's shuttle bay. The Phantom crashed on the ground and was rendered useless since it blew up as soon as it crashed on the ground.

"'Alright Marines, load in the Destroyer. Go!'" Sergeant Johnson ordered.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Five minutes later, UNSC Aegean Sea, January 5<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2552, 1659 hours by UTC.

><strong>"'Captain!'" Second Lieutenant John Sandman reported to the bridge.

"'At ease, Lieutenant.'" The Captain said and the Lieutenant came to the Captain's side.

"'Take a good look, this will be our final salvo before the full retreat of the Covenant fleet.'" The Captain said as John looked at the ship and noticed its 2 MAC guns charging up.

"'Fire MACs!'" The Admiral of the UNSC fleet ordered and with that order, the remainder of the UNSC Joint Fleet fired their MAC guns, destroying what ships they could, while the rest of the Covenant vessels flew away in slipspace, retreating from a battle they could not win.

The UNSC's fleet took a moment to honor those who sacrificed themselves in order to give the UNSC a victory against the Covenant and delay what seemed to be the inevitable. Delay and buy the time to arm accordingly.

"'Sir, if I am not needed, I will be on my way.'" The Lieutenant said.

"'Go on, go meet your girlfriend.'" The Captain said with a smile on his face.

"'Sir, we're not that close. Just friends.'" The Lieutenant tried to convince the Captain of the truth, but the Captain still stood his ground.

"'Heh. No, you're saying that now, but what will you say in the future?'" The Captain said and with that, the Lieutenant left, though with a smile on his face as he did believe in the Captain's words.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Moments later, 1719 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*Second Lieutenant John Sandman was heading towards the shower room as he really needed shower himself, but he was stopped when an ODST came to him.

"'Sir! The Major that landed in our hangar wants to see only the leader of our detachment that is you. You'd better get down to the medical bay.'" The ODST said and John immediately ran to the nearest elevator to get three decks lower.

When John arrived at the medical bay, he went inside the most heavily guarded room in it with four ODSTs standing guard outside of it and two more inside.

''Sir!'' The ODSTs on the outside lowered their guns and saluted to their commanding officer. The doors opened for John as he went inside and the ODSTs inside saluted him as well.

''I wish to speak with you alone!'' The Major demanded and John looked at the ODSTs, who understood John's order and left the room, showing their discipline.

''Speak, Elite.'' John said as he grabbed a nearby chair and placed it by the restrained Elite's bed.

''I wish to join you!'' The Elite said, albeit in a voice full of pain, because the restraints were keeping him secured enough.

''And why would someone who denounced us as filth join us? That sounds logical.'' John asked as he took off his helmet to allow the Elite to look him in the eye.

''Our Holy Prophets have lied to us all these ages! you're not filth, you're the sons of our Gods. Sons of the Forerunners!'' The Elite said, still in pain, as he looked closely in the ODST's eyes.

''What made you think that?'' John said and then looked in the Elite closing his eyes in pain. He decided to remove his restraints.

''You won't lash out at me if I remove these, will you?'' John asked as he was preparing to remove the restraints that were holding his limbs.

''You have my word that I won't. When a Sangheili gives a word, he keeps it. Besides, why would I attack someone that I want to help?'' The Elite Major replied to John's question as John proceeded to remove the restraints, allowing the Elite to sit up instead of lying on his bed.

''Thank you, human! say, what's your name?'' The Elite Major asked as he was rubbing his arm, trying to take the pain away.

''My name is John Sandman, I am an Orbital Drop Shock Trooper, Second Lieutenant in the UNSC Marine Corps. I was born to a mother that I never met! I have been with her for only three months, then she had to go back to fight. To give her life for humanity!'' John almost yelled and was emotional. The war had taken its toll on him.

''I understand your pain, hu-! John.'' The Elite Major corrected himself and put his hand on John's shoulder to try and calm him down. John looked at the alien hand on his shoulder.

''Sorry. What's your name?'' John asked but the Elite wasn't sure of what to say.

''Me! I have no name, after I betrayed my brothers and sisters to join you. I am unworthy of carrying the name I was given at birth.'' The Elite said, thinking that he betrayed his kind to join the side of truth.

''Look, we all make choices that we have difficulty swallowing, you did the right choice, rejected those beliefs of the Covenant. I'll

just call you by your rank, ''Major''. Is that alright?'' John asked the Elite.

''Yes, that will do. I know you want to ask me if I had tried to convince others.'' The Elite said and then showed a cut on his armor. ''This was made by a fellow Sangheili, who thought I was speaking nonsense. Heresy.'' The Elite said.

While the two were conversing, Staff Sergeant Johnson decided to visit the alien that John was speaking to. When he went inside, he was almost shocked to see an alien who hasn't attacked a human already.

''Well I'll be damned, you must have a silver tongue, Lieutenant, because this guy hasn't lashed out on you yet.'' Johnson said as he came closer.

''He isn't all that bad. I mean, he risked his life to help the Aegean Sea survive a broadside battle with a CCS-class Battlecruiser. He risked his life to get aboard it and hell, he is speaking freely with us, unlike that other one in the brig.'' Lieutenant Sandman explained to Sergeant Johnson.

''I see, well, I just wanted to check on him and since you're here, might as well go to the brig and see what that dumb bastard has to say.'' Johnson said as he left the room, leaving the Elite Major and Lieutenant John alone.

''Tell me, what made you change your opinion about us?'' John wanted to know this really badly.

''Well, I overheard the Holy Prophet of Regret talking to some other Prophets, speaking this and when I heard that he used a human as a key for activating a Forerunner Fleet, I realized that he was speaking the truth. The truth that was hidden from us since the start of this bloody war.'' The Elite responded and then looked in John's eyes again. ''I hear a certain human military branch wants to get us in their own hands for some procedures. You're not going to give me away to them, are you?'' The Elite asked to be sure that he has the protection of a human officer.

''I won't, I promise. Even if it means giving up my own life, to protect you, I won't give you away to the Office of Naval Intelligence even if a higher ranking officer forces me to do it.'' John promised the Major and put a hand on the Elite's shoulder.

''Thank you. And if needed, I will come with you on operations planetside or anywhere else to kill the Covenant, even if it means killing my own brethren. Though I would regret it later. I think.'' The Elite said as he was convinced that is brothers could not be convinced.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Well, ''Major'' has joined the UNSC's ranks, though secretly, as John is not planning to give him away to ONI or anyone else. He would be risking his neck out for an alien if an ONI agent catches it aboard the vessel. Find out what adventure or battle awaits in the next chapter and don't forget to leave your opinions in

a review!<strong>

## 5. The Fall of a Fortress, Part 1

\*\*Welcome to yet another chapter of this story. Not much to say for the intro except this: ''Let the reading begin!''.

><strong>

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Reach, Epsilon Eridani System, July 22nd, 2552, 0956 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*Reach, UNSC's military powerhouse, the pride colony of the Unified Earth Government. Housing just below four hundred million defenders on its soil and in orbit, Reach's defenses are only second to Earth's. It had a huge flow of refugees from all over the remaining human colonies. People that didn't want to get killed by the Covenant came to the most heavily defended planet that was now in the very front of the war and everyone knew how damn important Reach is because if it falls, the Covenant will have an open lane to Earth.

''Just at the beginning of this war, it seemed like we have a chance to survive. Now, look at this. We've been pushed back by at least six hundred colonies, billions of deaths and most of the deaths on our side.'' Thomas Lasky said while looking at Reach through the observation window of the UNSC Aegean Sea. He was speaking to the newly promoted First Lieutenant John Sandman.

''Every last human will have to give everything for Reach and when Reach falls, there is no doubt it will, since we don't know the full extent of the Covenant's naval strength, they will have to give even more for Earth, for the world which we all come from.'' John said and then looked behind him as he noticed Major come up to them.

''Yeahâ€|'' Lasky replied while he kept looking at Reach and its two moons, Turul and Csodaszarvas. He then turned around to see an Elite and he was rather shocked. He primed his M6C pistol at him, but John ran to protect him, standing in front of Major.

''Lasky, stop. He's with us! He left the Covenant!'' John said as Lasky slowly put his M6C back in its holster.

''Sorry.'' Lasky excused himself and observed the Elite.

''That's alright. I have a feeling that many on this vessel will try to shoot me.'' Major said to Lasky as he accepted his apology, knowing that hostilities from other crew members might continue.

''That's alright, just give us a nod and we'll help you out when needed. After all, you're a friend of John's and any friend of his, is an ally of mine.'' Thomas Lasky said as he tried to ease up Major's worries.

''Thank you, human.'' Major said as he then turned to go to John's private quarters that he shared with Major. John immediately followed.

"See you later, Lasky." John said as he waved to him.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>John's private quarters, UNSC Aegean Sea, 1022 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*John was watching a movie on a TV installed in the wall. It was a drama about life on Earth during this Great War. Life was depicted as being rather normal with the occasional conflicts, bar fights and drinking and John didn't know if it was based on real facts or just made to make other colonies think that Earth's supplies weren't even remotely being depleted.

"Is this Earth?" Major asked as he looked at a holo-still of Mars, the most industrial planet in the Sol System which produces every piece of equipment for the UNSC thanks to the Misriah Armories being there.

"No, that's Mars. Though it's very close to Earth. The other planet, the one covered mostly with oceans, that's Earth." John explained how Earth looks like in a holo-still and Major then looked at the picture that was described. Earth looked a lot more beautiful than Sanghelios from orbit.

"It has more beauty than Sangheliosâ€| It's a pity the Covenant have to destroy it." Major said while looking at a holo-still.

"If I survive the war, maybe you can give me a tour of Sanghelios, eh?" John said as his movie ended and he turned off the TV.

"I would, if my race would accept me backâ€| yes." Major replied as he put the holo-still back.

"The lies that your races have been fedâ€| speaking of feeding, I need to feed myselfâ€| " John said as he felt the need to eat.

"Care to join me? I am sure you will find something edible in our mess hall." John offered a chance that Major could not resist as he had to eat to keep himself alive as well.

"Alrightâ€| " Major accepted and the two went for the mess hall of the ship.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Mess Hall, 1101 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*"If anyone gives you trouble, give me a whisper and I'll put them down. Verbally or otherwise." John said as the two entered the mess hall. When they entered the mess hall, everyone was shocked to see an Elite, especially without hand cuffs and walking alongside their commanding officer. They literally stopped eating, talking and drinking. An alien among humans.

"El Tee, are you sure you'd not keep that thing on a leash?" A Lance Corporal asked First Lieutenant Sandman.

"Shut up and eat, Marine." Lieutenant Sandman patted the Lance Corporal on his shoulder and told him to be silent.

"John! Where've you been? I've been looking all over the ship for

you!'' Jessica said as John approached the area of the mess hall that stored the meals for the Marines.

''Take a pick, Major.'' John said as he then turned to talk with Second Lieutenant Jessica Mackenzie.

''What did you want, Jess.'' John asked as he was curious to know what she wanted.

''Remember that day, in our first battle, when we admitted in love to each other?'' Jessica tried to reach John's memories.

''I doâ€œ I still feel the same way about you.'' He replied to his long-time friend.

''Wellâ€œ Iâ€œ I think we should finally hook up, you know? My instinct says we won't survive the next battleâ€œ or at least one of us will die.'' She silently whispered to John, but Major was listening to them as well as he was trying out different human foods from salad to meat.

''You're being pessimistic, Jess. We'll live, but I won't turn down your offer now, will I?'' John said as he looked in Jessica's eyes and noticed sadness. He decided to hug her to try and comfort her as he knew that every time they go into battle, the risk of losing their lives is high. So far, they've been lucky.

''You won't leave me, will you?'' She asked while being hugged by John.

''No.'' John replied with a short but serious answer.

''Our two Lieutenants look like they're about to make out with each other.'' One of the Marines said, while in a conversation with his group. Major could hear them since he was the one hearing closely and the group wasn't far away, they were the nearest.

''Knock it off, Marine. They've been through a lot, give them some time together.'' A female Marine Sergeant said, to stop the Marine from thinking weird thoughts.

''Sorry, ma'am.'' The Marine apologized and continued to eat.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Two days later, July 24<strong>\*\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 1133 hours by UTC, UNSC Aegean Sea, 2\*\*\*\*nd\*\*\*\* LT Mackenzie's quarters.

><strong>John woke up in a bed along with Jessica Mackenzie. Remembering that he spent a romantic night with her, he got up to get dressed in his off-duty uniform.

''Hmâ€œ well, that escalated quickly.'' He said, remembering every moment, from sharing a romantic dinner to having sex with Mackenzie.

''I hope Major didn't spy on me out of his curiosityâ€œ'' He whispered to himself as he then left the room to head back to his own quarters.

When he arrived in his quarters, he noticed that Major was sleeping on his bed. John then noticed a datapad with a red alert on it. He

picked it up and read its contents.

\*\*-RED ALERT-

>-COVENANT PRESENCE CONFIRMED ON REACH<br>-ALL UNSC GROUND AND SPACE UNITS REPORT FOR COMBAT WITH COVENANT  
>-WINTER CONTINGENCY IS IN EFFECT<br>-MAY GOD HELP US ALL-\*\*

''Holy shitâ€!'' John lowered his datapad. Seeing as how the whole ship was still sleeping, he approached his desk and on it was a red button that was to be pressed in case of an emergency. It was protected by glass. John smashed the glass and the button along with it, issuing a ship-wide red alert.

''Alert. Everyone report to their stations. This is not a drill, this is a combat alert. Threat is imminent.'' A female voice spoke across the ship, directing people to their stations.

''Lieutenant, what the hell is going on?'' The Captain asked as he didn't realize the situation as well.

''It's the Covenant. They're on Reach.'' John said and noticed how Major woke up in a hurry.

''Oh Godâ€!'' The Captain said and the comms ended. John opened his closet and in it was his shock trooper armor â€" entirely black, like his attitude towards his enemy. He put on the armor in a hurry and asked Major for some assistance.

''Major, help me seal the back of the armor. Hurry, there's little time!'' John said to speed Major up.

''On it!'' Major said as he was sealing the back of John's ODST armor. When he was done, he picked up John's ODST helmet and gave it to him. John then proceeded to put it on and he then opened his eyes when the helmet was on his head. The visor immediately polarized and his VISR activated.

''It's time to kick ass. Let's go, Major.'' John said as he told Major to follow him.

''I will follow you wherever you go, friend.'' Major replied and began following John.

''All Orbital Drop Shock Troopers are to report to the pod bays immediately.'' The Captain said through the ship's intercom system.

John and Major arrived at the pod bays shortly and were met with ODSTs ready to get into the pods. John grabbed an MA37 and an M6C that he holstered to his thigh holster. Major kept using his Energy sword, but also took a human weapon. He chose the M392 Designated Marksman Rifle.

''An elegant choice.'' John commented as he turned around to look at the ODSTs.

''Get in your pods, move it!'' He shouted and the ODSTs immediately began loading in the Human Entry Vehicles. John then proceeded to get in a pod himself.

"Where should I go?" Major asked as he noticed that he was too big to fit in the human drop pods.

"Look, go down to the hangar. Meet Staff Sergeant Johnson or Second Lieutenant Mackenzie there. Tell them to deliver you to my coordinates." John explained as the doors of the pod closed.

"And what if they don't?" Major asked on coms.

"They will. Get moving!" John ordered and Major then began running towards the hangar that was a few decks lower.

"Dropping pods over Eposz, next to the city of New Alexandria." The Captain announced and soon after, the doors below the pods began opening.

"Dropping in ten seconds." Lieutenant John announced as the countdown began with beeping every second. At the last second, John announced the beginning.

"Drop!" John said and the drop began with pods dropping from all three ships of Task Force 12/A-4. More than a hundred pods were dropped, while the rest of the force is going down on Pelicans.

The flight of the HEVs passed without incident and all pods landed safely on the ground. John was informed about the objective during the flight.

"Alright, Marines, we have to secure the city. Take up positions in all key buildings starting from Misriah Armory offices to spaceports. Got that?" John informed of the objectives and waited for a reply.

"Sir, yes, sir!" The ODSTs replied.

"Spread out, go!" John ordered as he stood in place, waiting for a Pelican carrying Major to arrive.

After a few minutes of waiting, Major arrived with Staff Sergeant Johnson and Lieutenant Mackenzie in a single Pelican dropship. The Pelican landed but did not deactivate its engines. It had a M12 Warthog attached and it dropped it. Jessica and Major left the Pelican while Johnson came closer to the blast doors of the dropship.

"Hey, John, it's been nice onboard your boat, but now I've been moved to some other boat. Have fun, survive this nightmare and maybe we'll meet at some bar and share a few beers." Johnson said as the blast doors closed and the Pelican departed, leaving a Warthog, Major, Jessica and John on the ground. The three got in the Warthog, John at the wheel, Major sitting in the passenger's seat and Jessica manning the Light Anti-Aircraft Gun.

"Where are we going?" Jessica asked and John replied after looking at one of the highest buildings in New Alexandria.

"FLEETCOM headquarters. The Olympic tower." John said and Jessica immediately located the two kilometer high tower.

"ONI won't let us in there." Jessica said after observing.

"ONI can't do shit anymore. Winter Contingency is in effect and ONI is made up of civilians, not soldiers." John said and then looked towards Major who didn't seem confused about what WINTER CONTINGENCY meant.

The Warthog sped past many civilians that were trying to understand the situation when one woman stopped the Warthog.

"Stop! Stop!" She exclaimed and John stopped the vehicle.

"Lady, if you'd be kind, get the hell out of the way. We're in a hurry, Winter Contingency is in effect."

"Trooper, get me off planet. I have a family on Earth that I need to get back to right now, but no civilian ship is available." The woman said.

"Lady, first off, I am no Army Trooper, I belong in the Marine Corps, and second, if you want to evacuate, you have to get to the nearest UNSC spaceport and wait for an evacuation shuttle to arrive. Trying to appeal directly to an Army Infantryman or a Marine will get you nowhere." John replied and then drove the vehicle right around the woman, past her and sped towards the Olympic tower. When the three reached the tower, they were being greeted by UNSC Marines guarding the tower.

"I'm sorry, I will have to see your IDs and the reason of why you are here." One of the Marines spoke.

"Marine, I am First Lieutenant John Sandman, UNSC Marine Corps, Orbital Drop Shock Troopers. I am here on UNSC's business. More specifically, I am going to use this base as an FOB for Task Force Twelve Alpha Four's further operations on the continent. Also, Winter Contingency is in effect. Now step away!" John said when the two Marines halted him to question him about the Elite.

"I surely hope the Winter Contingency is just because of that thing!" The other Marine said.

"No, he has nothing to do with it and he's on our side. Now, if you don't let me past, I will have to contact Fleet Command and inform them of your disobedience and your attempts into stalling military deployments." John threatened the Marines and then the two stepped aside.

"All of you may pass." The first Marine said and John, along with Jessica and Major went inside the Olympic tower.

"Where to now?" Jessica asked.

"Nowâ€¢ now we're heading two thousand meters higher." John said as he noticed an elevator being emptied out. He ran towards it and ordered all ONI operatives and FLEETCOM officers to step away from it.

"Everyone back off, military business!" John said as Jessica and Major went in the elevator. He fell back and hit the button that took him two thousand meters higher, to a perfect observation area.

"The looks some of them had on me wereâ€| intimidating." Major said as he remembered ONI operatives looking at him in fear and anger.

"Those were most likely Office of Naval Intelligence operatives. Those who were looking in fear were Fleet Command officers." Jessica tried to ease Major's mind.

After a short while of going upwards, the group reached their floor and when they left the elevator, they noticed the floor filled with officers.

"Everyone, get down, now! This floor is now property of the United Nations Space Command Marine Corps." John said as he walked around the area. The officers immediately loaded up in elevators to clear space for the Marines and their friend as they realized that WINTER CONTINGENCY is in effect.

"Alrightâ€| that's better. Jessica, you brought the beacon with you?" John asked to Jess if she brought the IFF beacon with her to mark that John and his team have settled in a building and are on the lookout for Covenant.

"Yes. Let me place it hereâ€|" She said as she placed one beacon on one side of the floor, "'â€|and here.'" and another beacon on the other side of the floor. When the beacons activated, the rest of the ODSTs knew that a high enough position has been secured and a lookout for Covenant has been established.

"Now we wait for any news or redeployments." John said as he activated the coms and listened to the chatter all around the planet.

"This is Colonel Urban Holland to command. There need to be recon teams on the lookout across the entire planet. Right now." Colonel Urban Holland, the man in charge of a SPARTAN-III unit â€" NOBLE Team â€" asked to Reach's military command.

"Affirmative Colonel Holland. Your request is acknowledged and recon units are now being directed all across Reach." A member of high command replied.

Jess then tuned in to a radio station translating live from New Alexandria.

"This is Winter Contingency live from New Alexandria and today, we've spotted hundreds of Marines, more specifically Orbital Drop Shock Troopers, dropping in our city. This can mean only one thing people, Winter Contingency. The planet is under attack! This is the end people!" A radio operator announced.

"That bastard's not doing anything to keep the civilians normal. I won't be surprised if riots start planet-wide." John commented and then approached a window to look on the streets below.

"That man needs to be shot." Major commented and with that, John actually agreed with him.

"I actually agree with that Major. These guys who lower the morale of our civilians don't deserve to liveâ€| or at least they should

lose their job and reputation.'' John said as he was shocked to notice a lack of street riots.

''Hey, Sandman, this is Chris and John here. We're telling you that we're getting redeployed from your task force to ÄœtkÄ¶zet for now. Good luck.'' Chris C-333 and John B-201 reported in to John Sandman.

''Roger, good luck to both of you, Spartans. Sandman out.'' John acknowledged and kept looking at the streets and occasionally taking a look at the sky.

''It's kind of quiet down there and up there.'' Major said as it felt strange that it was too calm.

''ONI hasn't tried to attack you yet. That's new. Anyways, Jessica, can the elevators reach us without a password?'' John asked.

''Negative. I've set up a password and a firewall to protect this floor from ONI or Covenant.'' Jessica replied.

''Thank your expertise, dear.'' John said as he then sat down on the floor and removed his helmet. Now he was supposed to wait for the Covenant activity to increase.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Less than a month later, August 18<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2552, New Alexandria, Eposz, Reach. 0536 hours by Local Time.

><strong>''â€| I understand the situation Generalâ€| yesâ€| yes, I-â€| of course sir, butâ€|'' John was talking on the coms with a Major General â€" the man in charge of the 105th Shock Trooper Division of the Marine Corps. ''Understood, sir. First Lieutenant Sandman out.'' John said and then turned to his group in the Olympic tower.

''Alright, here's the deal. We have to evacuate every civilian out of the city before a Covenant division can arrive here. We have to leave the tower, now, let's get the hell moving!'' John explained the new objective to the platoon.

''Affirmative, sir. Where do we begin?'' An ODST asked.

''We're taking the area in and around Traxus tower. Once we've gathered enough civilians there, we'll move further by activating FPF missile batteries and then we're to retreat from the city and get to the space tethers to protect the elevators heading upwards to the stations that are being defended by the Epsilon Eridani Fleet and the UNSC Trafalgar at its core.'' John explained the objectives to the ODSTs through coms and to the Platoon in the tower using his voice.

''Roger that, we're doing it now!'' The ODSTs replied.

''Let's get down there and help our guys out. The Covenant are already storming the city and the outer perimeter has been breached.'' John said and the platoon loaded in elevators, heading down. When they reached the floor, the Covenant were just outside the

building.

"Get in cover and wait for my go to open fire." John ordered and the entire platoon along with Jessica Mackenzie and Major took cover. Major installed a M247 General Purpose Machine Gun on a nearby desk and took aim on the Brutes that were just outside.

John gave a nod to Major and he unleashed fire on the Brutes that were trying to kick open the doors of the Olympic Tower. The rain of lead literally blew each and every one of those apes away by at least twenty meters.

"Marines, get the fuck out! Move! Head for Traxus Tower!" John ordered and the entire platoon ran for Traxus Tower which was not too far away.

"What should we do now?" Major said as his M247 GPMG ran out of ammo.

"Take cover behind the Warthog and respond back with fire." John said as he loaded in a clip in the MA37 and he then moved out of cover and ran straight behind the turned around M12 "Warthog" Force Application Vehicle. John responded to the Brutes, who were firing their Spike rifles, with suppressing fire from his MA37 Assault Rifle. Jessica joined in right after and added her own fire to the equation. Major also joined in and fired from the M392 DMR. He was the one keeping off Brutes from smashing the ODSTs with their Gravity Hammers.

The Brutes advanced with brutal force upon the three defenders.

"Jessica, get to Traxus Tower! Go!" John ordered as he realized that they won't be able to hold the Brutes off for long and they weren't ordered to protect Olympic Tower.

"Butâ€¢!" She tried to resist while John was reloading his gun.

"No buts, get over there. If we both die, the company will be left without an officer. GO!" John shouted and Jessica immediately ran away to get to Traxus Tower.

"Was that necessary?" Major said as he was picking off Brutes with headshots.

"Ye-â€¢!" John didn't finish his sentence as he felt their cover being blown away by a Gravity Hammer. "Fuckâ€¢!" John said as he noticed that he and Major were surrounded. He quickly reloaded his MA37 and Major reloaded his M392 DMR. The two went in a back-to-back position and looked at the dozen Brutes that were surrounding them.

"This is the end, Majorâ€¢!" John said while aiming at six of the twelve Brutes.

"I agree, Johnâ€¢ let's make it worth it." Major suggested and John agreed with his proposal of an honorable death.

"FOR EARTH!" John shouted out loudly and began firing.

''FOR SANGHELIOS!'' Major yelled out with a widely open mouth and opened fire from his DMR.

The Brutes immediately lashed out at Major and John from all four sides.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Well... the friendly Elite Major and First Lieutenant John Sandman are surrounded by a squad of Brutes. Can they ever come out alive from this? Find out in the next chapter! And as always, leave your thoughts in a review.<strong>

## 6. The Fall of a Fortress, Part 2

''FOR EARTH!''

''FOR SANGHELIOS!''

An exchange between lead bullets and metal spikes ensued as John and Major were fighting to die an honorable death. John was shot two times by spikes from a Brute Spiker and was on the verge of receiving ten more spikes to his abdomen when a SPARTAN-III Headhunter jumped in front of him, blocking the spikes from hitting him. It was John B-201.

''You okay, Lieutenant?'' John asked the Lieutenant.

''Ah, yeah!'' Lieutenant Sandman answered and got up, despite having two spikes sticking out of him.

''Here, let me help.'' Major said as Chris C-333 took his place in the fight against the Brutes.

''What?'' John said as Major grabbed hold of one of the spikes and began pulling it out of John's stomach.

''Gah! Aaaah!'' John shouted out from the pain as Major pulled out one of the two spikes. He then proceeded to pull out a second spike and Chris gave him a bottle. Major didn't know what was it, but John took it from Major's hands.

''It's biofoam! It keeps wounds shut until proper medical attention can be given.'' John said and then pointed at his two wounds. Major immediately understood that he had to spray the biofoam into John's wounds and he took the bottle from John's hands.

Major inserted the head of the bottle in one wound and sprayed biofoam to fill the wound, preventing John from having a blood loss, then he moved onto the other and emptied the bottle in it. He threw the bottle away as it became empty and therefore useless as well.

''Will you be alright?'' Major asked his best human friend.

''I'll live, it's just that biofoam is very painful at the first seconds of its use.'' John explained as Major seemed concerned about him when he was being tormented by pain.

John B-201 holstered his M392 DMR behind his back and kneeled down to take a closer look on John Sandman and his Elite friend.

"'You've got a few more hours until the biofoam breaks down. You need to get to the nearest hospital.'" John said while Chris was watching over the perimeter. He then noticed two Warthogs coming their way. The Warthogs arrived very quickly and stopped right next to their position. Its passengers consisted of a group of SPARTAN-IIIs.

"'Noble team.'" Chris C-333 said as he looked at the four SPARTANs.

"'Step away, let me take a look at your wounded Marine.'" One of the SPARTANs said. It was a female SPARTAN, the only female of the team. She went closer to Lieutenant Sandman and observed his wounds. She also noticed that an Elite was among the group.

"'What is this thing doing here?'" She asked and her team immediately aimed their guns at the Elite.

"'Stop!'" Chris C-333 and John B-201 went in front of the team's weapons to protect Sandman's friend. "'He's an ally.'" Chris C-333 explained.

"'Stand down, Noble.'" The team's commander, Carter-A259, ordered and holstered his M6G by his thigh. "'Who are you two?'" He asked as he did not know who were the two Spartans in front of him. They were wearing a much darker armor and their configurations seemed off with normal Spartan armor.

"'It's classified.'" John B-201 answered as ONI's secrets could not be revealed.

"'Alrightâ€| Kat, how is he?'" Carter-A259 asked his second in command, Catherine-B320.

"'He's going to be fine, there's nothing much that I need to do. The Elite seemed to do everythingâ€|'" She said as she looked in the Elite's eyes through her helmet. His look was filled with anger towards her. She slowly stepped back to avoid provoking him, as she thought that it would get worse.

"'Alright thenâ€| let's get in the tower.'" Carter said as that seemed to be their main order.

The team passed and no one seemed to ask any questions as to why they are here and why were they deployed to a tower that was kept secure by UNSC forces for less than a month.

"'John, can you walk?'" John B-201 asked Lieutenant Sandman, who was struggling to get up, but then got up by himself without any help, refusing the Spartan's or the Sangheili's help.

"'I'll be fine. It's not like I'm about to dieâ€|'" John said as he rolled his eyes behind his helmet in annoyance that the people around him thought that he was too injured to walk. He even pointed at his stomach.

"The wounds were hereâ€|'" John then pointed down to his legs. The armor was unscratched. "'â€|not here.'" He explained.

"Alrightâ€| look, now we really have to go to our destination. There's our ride out of here. You need to get yourself to a doctor before your biofoam breaks down." Chris C-333 said as a Pelican landed next to their position and six UNSC Army Infantrymen came out of it.

"Spartans, load in. You gotta get the hell moving before something worse happens." One of the Army Infantrymen, a Sergeant, said. The Spartans then loaded in the Pelican with the Army Infantrymen that followed them inside. Soon after, the Pelican took off and went sky high, behind the clouds.

"Greatâ€| they could've given us a lift at leastâ€|'" John said as the Infantrymen didn't offer him transportation to the nearest unoccupied hospital.

"We can always take one of those two vehicles that you humans call 'Warthogs'." Major suggested and John liked his idea. The two hopped in the Warthog with John being the passenger and Major taking the wheel.

"Can you figure it out by yourself, or do I need to take the wheel?" John said as he observed Major, who was trying to figure out what to do.

"Noâ€| I can figure it out." Major said as he then struggled to remember what John did while driving the Hog. He remembered everything began driving the 3-ton military vehicle. He forced the vehicle to move faster and faster as he was navigating the city and its urban obstacles to reach the nearest landing zone that the UNSC had set up for medical evacuations (MEDEVAC), casualty evacuations (CASEVAC) and other deliveries.

"You're surprisingly good, Major. Better than some in my company." John commented on Major's driving skill, as he noticed it being better than some Marines.

"Thank you." Major acknowledged that as a comment.

Major kept driving until they reached the nearest landing zone in which two D77-TC "'Pelican'" dropships were being loaded with injured Marines and Army Infantrymen. They still had a spot for one wounded soldier.

"Major, stay with Jessica and keep her safe. Don't follow me until I am back on the field." John ordered as he jumped out of the Warthog. He then kept walking towards one of the medics who then proceeded to help him get in a Pelican. Major, making himself sure that John is safe and loaded into an evacuation transport, drives away to the last known position of Second Lieutenant Mackenzie. When Major left, the Pelicans soon followed as they closed their back doors and took off, heading up for orbit where several UNSC Frigate-type ships specifically suited for medical duty still existed.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Mackenzie's Area of Operations, August

18<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2552, 1033 hours by Local Time.  
><strong>''Keep firing! We need to get to that missile battery!'' Jessica ordered as she was firing her MA37 Assault Rifle to suppress the little Grunts and the Brutes who were keeping them back from the city's Final Protective Fire missile battery. The Covenant footsoldiers keeping them back were bashed away when a Warthog rammed them all out of cover and killed them. A plasma grenade, however, managed to attach itself to the Warthog and blow it up, most likely killing the driver, but some did climb out of the destroyed Warthog.

''Majorâ€|?'' Jessica said as she noticed an Elite climbing out. She was happy to see him because that made her understand that John is alive and well as well and she knew that John couldn't have been in the Warthog, because that run was suicidal and only Major is properly protected from explosions thanks to his energy shield.

''Jessicaâ€| John was hurt when we made our stand. He's alive and being moved to a hospital somewhere.'' Major explained what happened to John and Jessica seemed to feel even better, because deep in her heart, she had a feeling that Major brought bad news â€" that John was killed.

''Ohâ€| thank you for being with him, Major.'' Jessica thanked Major as she felt even better. She then turned around to see John's ODSTs waiting for an order.

''Everyone, get out of cover and secure the missile battery. We will await further orders while securing a perimeter.'' Jessica ordered as she then awaited further orders from Command.

''Second Lieutenant Jessica Mackenzie, this is the General. I am aware that you are now the acting commanding officer of Thirty Ninth Shock Company, so these orders are coming to you. Head for the Viery Territory and assist the UNSC forces there. They are currently retreating, but they need to keep their supplies safe, keep the Covenant off their backs and fall back at the same time and that's where your Company comes in â€" they must keep the Covenant occupied, prevent them from striking hard into our lines and stop them from destroying the 1st Army of Viery. Is that understood?'' The General of the Marine Corps ordered her and soon after, 10 Pelican dropships arrived to haul the one hundred and twenty UNSC Marines to Viery.

''Copy that General, Thirty Ninth is Oscar Mike.'' Jessica said as a Pelican landed right next to her and she, along with Major and ten more ODSTs loaded in it. As soon as it was filled, it took off and left for Viery territory.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Viery Territory, Reach, August 18<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2552, 1101 hours by Local Time.

><strong>39th Shock Company arrived at Viery Territory onboard ten Pelican dropships. They arrived right next to the frontline which was at the middle of the territory and being pushed up North. The Pelicans dropped them near a mobile command center â€" a Behemoth-class Troop Transport containing several high-ranking UNSC Army officers from Major to a General. The ODST company was released right next to it and Jessica approached the Behemoth-class.

''Sirs, Thirty Ninth Shock Company has arrived to assist with protecting the First Army of Viery. Orders?'' Jessica Mackenzie asked for orders for the company.

''Yeah. Rendezvous with Gunnery Sergeant Romanenko and Staff Sergeant McCloskey who are currently the acting commanders of the Eighty Fifth Shock Company and they'll brief you on your objective. Head Southeast, you'll find them by a cliff. Go!'' A Colonel said and with that, Jessica ordered the company to head Southeast, to find Romanenko and McCloskey. She knew the names, because she and John once served alongside a Romanenko and a McCloskey, two friends who were also recommended for ODST training.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Moments later, Eighty Fifth Shock Company's area of operations, August 18<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2552, 1122 hours by Local Time.

><strong>The entire 39th Shock Company arrived at the 85th Shock Company's location and noticed a badly beaten up group of ODSTs. At best two platoons of ODSTs still battle capable, while two more were either wiped out or heavily injured. Two ODST Sergeants were sitting on a large rock, overlooking the field.

''Gunnery Sergeant Romanenko and Staff Sergeant McCloskey, get your asses down here, now!'' Second Lieutenant Jessica Mackenzie shouted at the two ODSTs trying to make an assessment of the situation. The two reported to her immediately.

''Staff Sergeant Arthur McCloskey reporting in, ma'am!'' The Staff Sergeant stood still and saluted.

''Gunnery Sergeant Michael Romanenko, reporting, ma'am!'' The Gunnery Sergeant did the same.

''At ease you two, it's me, Jessica.'' Jessica said as her visor depolarized, revealing her face. The two Sergeants were shocked to see an old friend.

''Wow, hey Jess! It's been damn long since we last saw each other.'' McCloskey said before Romanenko could open his mouth.

''Damnâ€¦ Second El Tee, huh?'' Romanenko said something, after all.

''I've missed you both too. John would be damn happy to see you two as well.'' Jessica said as she then looked up in the sky.

''Where is he? Is he dead?'' McCloskey said, out of fear that an old friend would be dead.

''Noâ€¦ noâ€¦ he's just up in one of those medical frigates, as far as I know.'' Jessica said, while looking at Major, who nodded his head, confirming what Jessica just said.

''Alrightâ€¦ well, we're aware that you and your company have been sent to help us out, so, here's the deal. The Covenant are attacking in brute force with air support. We've been able to hold off two waves, but in the last one, we've lost our tanks and vehicles. We

need you to get all the vehicles you have in the trenches and man the positions that were once crewed by our warriors.'' Romanenko explained the situation.

''Marines, get in positions and get our vehicles up here. Move it, move it!'' Jessica issued orders and the Shock Troopers immediately executed them, manning deserted positions and bringing up vehicles to the front line.

''Fifth Armored Company and Two Hundred and First Infantry Company will be holding the line a bit more to the East.'' McCloskey said as he got up on a rock and grabbed his sniper rifle.

''The attacks should come any minute now.'' Major said on the coms as he was holding back, sitting on the side of an M808 Scorpion tank.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Several hours later, 0001 hours by Local Time, Orbit above Reach, UNSC Medical Frigate, August 19<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2552.

><strong>''The Epsilon Eridani Fleet's line is breaking! They're unable to sustain high losses anymore!'' One of the crewmen aboard the ship said, but little did he know that First Lieutenant John Sandman was silently sneaking out of his private room to get to the armory and arm himself for a fight.

''Lieutenant Sandman, you are not allowed to leave your room until four o'clock this morning!'' One of the crew members, a nurse, said upon seeing the ODST.

''Get the hell out of my way, nurse. I need to get back to the fight!'' John threw words back at the nurse and continued to head for the armory where his armor was being stashed. The nurse kept following him.

''You know I can't let you off of this ship, don't you?'' She said as she kept following the ODST Lieutenant.

''Try and stop me, I dare you. No, I double dare you to stop me.'' John challenged the nurse while he kept heading for the armory. When he finally reached it, he noticed it was protected by a password that he did not know.

''I know the code, butâ€|'' The nurse said while her mind was in a state of fighting. She wanted to help John get off the ship and return to the fight, but she knew that would be a violation of a rule placed by Captain Crews to keep John in the ship until he is fully healed and ready for intense combat.

''â€|but you will help me out either way.'' John turned around to look at the nurse with his hazel colored eyes. ''You have toâ€|'' John said as he kept staring into her eyes.

''Iâ€| noâ€| I can't.'' She said while her mind was still fighting itself.

''Fine then.'' John said as he went to his Plan B. Improvisation. ''Time to improvise.'' He said and opened the security console and tore out two wires. Those wires were connecting the armory's doors to

the entire system of the frigate and without the connection, the locks were unsealed and the doors could be easily opened. John used this to get in, get his armor and weapons and quickly abandon ship while the Covenant still haven't reached it, as they weren't too far away from it.

John was heading for the hangar bay of the frigate and the nurse was still giving chase to him. When he reached the nearest unoccupied D-77TC ''Pelican''. He jumped inside of it and ran immediately for the pilot's seat. His extensive combat training had limited pilot training in all types of UNSC craft, from dropships to space superiority fighters.

''Wait! Iâ€| uhâ€| let me join youâ€| as your field medic.'' The nurse said as she was afraid to die in the vacuum of space. ''At leastâ€| at least I won't die from a lack of oxygenâ€|'' She said and it reached John's heart. He couldn't resist helping a woman, especially someone who was as good-looking as that nurse.

''Hop in and strap in, because this might get a little bumpy.'' John said and the nurse climbed in the Pelican. The doors of the troop bay immediately closed and the Pelican dropship left the frigate, heading for the surface of Reach and passing by a recently finished Phoenix-class Colony Ship that was fitted with military modules, but the shipyards of Reach didn't have the time to fit it with proper armament, like oversized Archer missile pods, point-defense guns or the main weapon of any UNSC warship â€“ the Magnetic Accelerator Cannon. The ship only had visible Deck Guns, which were effective as broadside weapons, but lacked the usefulness for ranged fights.

''All UNSC ships above Reach, this is the Phoenix-class vessel, Charlie Foxtrot Victor Dash One Zero Zero, we're requesting assistance in getting away from the planet. Our Shaw-Fujikawa slipspace core wasn't installed during our assembly and we are unable to jump in a random direction. We need help!'' A crewman aboard the unnamed Phoenix-class shouted on the communications and John decided to help scavenge a Shaw-Fujikawa Translight Engine from the ruins of the Epsilon Eridani Fleet's ships.

''Change of plans, nurse. We're going to assist the Phoenix-class vessel. Hang on tight, because we're entering the shit zone. There is a hundred percent chance of raining tungsten and plasma directly above, below and beside us.'' John said as he began evasive maneuvers and the dropship's computer began scanning for any functional Translight engines.

After the dropship entered the warzone, it flew by a heavily battered UNSC Supercarrier trying to prowl behind the UNSC lines, but a final blow from a Covenant Supercruiser engulfs the ship in a massive, albeit non-nuclear, explosion, but the Pelican's computer detected an intact human slipspace drive which John dismissed as impossible, but still decided to check out. When his Pelican approached the area that once was the drive core room of the pride of the UNSC Navy â€“ The UNSC Trafalgar â€“ John saw a drifting slipspace core suited for massive ships from Phoenix-class to a Supercarrier.

''Well, that's going to be a problem. That drive weighs more than eighty tons and the Pelican has a maximum payload of seventyâ€|\_'' John thought to himself and then noticed the nurse approach him as

she too was observing the Shaw-Fujikawa drive of the destroyed Supercarrier.

"How are we going to get that to the colony ship?" She asked John who was turning the Pelican around to attach the massive drive to the Pelican via magnetic attachment.

"Let's just try it." John said and when the attachment process was complete, he engaged the thrusters and went to full speed to get away from the warzone. The engines seem to overheat with an increased speed, so after a minute of flying, John turned them on and began to float towards the Phoenix-class. He decided to save the engines for the deceleration and landing process. The dropship kept drifting in space until three Phantoms passed by it. They weren't heading for the Pelican or the Phoenix-class, they were heading for Task Force 12/A-4's vessels that were under attack by boarding craft. One of the two frigates suddenly exploded and John realized that the Covenant were performing sabotage attacks while the ships don't have a strong enough Marine presence.

"Damnit!" John smashed a console on the Pelican. It was the console of the main computer that automated a lot of the processes on the Pelican, now it was thrown offline.

"What? What happened?" The nurse asked and then looked at the broken console and then noticed a nuclear explosion right next to the North Pole of Reach. She realized that was a ship of the elite Task Force that was ordered to provide ground support to the retreating 1st Army of Viery, but now it was being ravaged by Covenant boarders.

"Without the Task Force, I won't be able to reach my unit down on the ground." John said as he kept looking at the Task Force and saw the second frigate exploding in a nuclear explosion. John then turned his head to the front of the Pelican when he saw that he was inside the Phoenix-class and nearing a dead-end. He activated all thrusters and turned all four nacelles down for maximum deceleration. The Pelican stopped just a meter short of ramming into the wall and John opened his eyes, seeing that he was alive and well and still holding tight onto the controls.

"Uh-oh! Captain of the Phoenix-class vessel, you've got a package in Hangar Bay Two in the form of a slipspace drive." John said and received a response a while later, while he was detaching the slipspace drive from the Pelican dropship.

"Thank you, Marine. Thank you very much! Also, this ship is under crewed. There are only, like, fifty people aboard and we've been ordered to get the hell out, but with a crew like this, we won't be able to get further than a few billion kilometers!" The "Captain" of the vessel said. John, then, silently contacted one of the Warrant Officers aboard the vessel and ordered him to load in a HAVOK Tactical Warhead into the Pelican's "blood tray".

"What's your rank, sailor?" John asked the crewman that was responding to him.

"Sir, Ensign, sir. I am the highest ranking commissioned officer aboard this ship, sir. The rest are Warrant Officers." The Ensign replied.

"Do you know anything about space warfare or commanding a starship?" John asked the Ensign on the coms.

"N-no, sir." The Ensign replied with a silent voice, trying to hide his shame.

"Damn, this complicates things. Alright, I am assuming command of this ship, directly. You will do as I say and I don't give a damn about branch differences. I will command this starship, and I will get as many people out as I can. Get your men installing that slipspace drive, NOW!" John yelled as his Pelican lifted off from the ground and turned around to point at the exit and it left the ship immediately.

"Where are we going now?" The nurse asked.

"We're heading down." John said as he was looking on a message in his VISR. The message came from Jessica, as he was secretly messaging her. She gave the coordinates for their location and John immediately rushed down, past anything the Covenant might throw to stop him. His Pelican was being escorted by two GA-TL1 Longsword interceptors.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Ten minutes later, Viery Territory, Reach, August 19<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 0122 hours by Local Time.  
<strong>Bloody fighting was occurring between four UNSC companies and at least a few Covenant battalions. The UNSC was buying success with their lives, since retreat was impossible due to the lack of support from the Army.

"Keep your heads down and fire back!" Jessica shouted for the Marines of the 39th Shock Company to be careful, but keep the Covenant pinned. She was then silenced by a Covenant plasma burst hitting right next to her. She was beginning to breathe with difficulty, but she was able to move her eyes and fingers without a problem. She noticed a Pelican heading for landing, albeit, at flank speed. A speed unacceptable for landing â€“ too fast. She pointed at it and some Marines looked at it. The Pelican crashed into a small hill right next to the position of the 39th and the 85th Shock Companies. Two ODSTs ran over to the crash site to see if there are any survivors or heavy weapons, but the doors of the Pelican were shut.

"Dammit, bro, we can't check for survivors without blowing the door open, but doing so might kill any survivors." One of the ODSTs said when the other looked in awe and pointed at the Pelican.

"Look." The other ODST said as he was looking at Lieutenant John Sandman standing on top of the Pelican with an M247 General Purpose Machine Gun in his hands, with an ammo chain heading up to his back and a nurse standing right next to her.

"Surprise." The Lieutenant said as he hopped off the top of the Pelican and approached the two ODSTs.

"SITREP, Marines." He ordered while he was looking over the nurse to see if she can get off without any scratches.

''Sir, our Companies are getting battered into shit by the Covenant. We've been ordered to delay them long enough to buy time for the Army to retreat and take up better defensive positions. If you ask me, Sir, this is a suicide.'' One of the ODSTs reported to the Lieutenant.

''Nah, it ain't anymore.'' John said as he detached a warhead from his back.

''Shit, Sir. Are you sure it's safe?'' The other ODST said as he observed the HAVOK Warhead.

''There is no other way to test it, than to plant it directly in the way of the Covenant advance.'' John said with humor and attached it back to the magnets on his back and took the M247 GPMG firmly in his hands.

''Lead the way to the trenches, Marines.'' John said and the ODSTs began leading the way for John.

''Follow me, Miss. You'll have to treat our heavily wounded.'' John said as he looked into the nurse's eyes and then turned away to head for the trenches. The nurse immediately followed.

After a short while of sprinting, the team arrived at the position where John was met by two old friends, Jessica and Major.

''Romanenko. McCloskey. Good to see you two again.'' John said as he looked over the position to observe the Covenant for a second and then he lowered his head back.

''John.'' Jessica Mackenzie said while looking at him. The man of her life.

''Jess.'' John replied as he put a HAVOK Warhead on the ground.

''What are you planning to do?'' McCloskey asked as he was shocked to see a nuclear weapon right next to him.

''Blow this place up and the Covenant with it, but not before evacuating the Marines.'' He said and then contacted the unnamed Phoenix-class vessel.

''Ensign, do you have Longswords and pilots for them aboard your ship?'' John asked the young Ensign.

''Yes, Sir, we've got forty Longswords, but only five pilots.'' The Ensign replied on coms.

''Good. I need them to establish a safe route for a few Pelicans.'' John said and then switched channel to 1st Army's Command.

''General, I need your Pelican transports!'' He demanded the General to get evacuated from the area.

''Sorry, Lieutenant Sandman, but we can't give you any Pelicans! You have to keep the Covenant off our asses!'' The General replied, but

John wasn't going to give up. His plan needed the General to comply.

"General, I have a HAVOK Tactical Warhead with me and I will lay a trap for the Covenant, but I need to evac all of these Marines out. There will be five Longsword interceptors establishing a safe zone soon. If you don't send me Pelican dropships, Earth will lose two elite Marine Shock Trooper companies!" John appealed to the General's humanity. Losing these men would mean a lesser chance of securing human survival.

"Twenty Pelican dropships en-route. But you'll have to execute your plan real quick." The General gave up and sent dropships to help.

"The nuke is remote controlled. We'll be long gone by the time it murders a brigade of Covenant, if not more." John said as he closed the coms channel that he had opened for a short while. He then proceeded to secure a remote link from his datapad to the HAVOK Nuke, but there was some sort of interference, plus the crash damaged some certain circuits of it that prevented remote detonation.

"Fuck!" John cursed as he could not get the nuke ready for remote detonation.

"John, what the hell are we going to do now? We have to detonate it somehow!" Romanenko said as the nuke had to be detonated. The fate of two hundred thousand humans hanged in the balance.

"I'm going to detonate it manually." John said as he threw his datapad away and armed the nuke for manual detonation.

"You're not! are you mad?!" McCloskey and Romanenko said in unison as John was about to sacrifice himself for the survival of an Army.

"I am and nothing will stop me." John replied, but then Major stopped him.

"No, you are too valuable an asset for your race. I will lure the Covenant in and detonate the warhead." Major said as John was looking at the nuke. Agreeing to give the hardest choice in the world to someone else was even harder than just slapping the warhead.

"Alright, Major, but I won't forget you. I won't." John said as he gave the warhead over to Major.

"See this head?" John pointed at the tip of the warhead. "It's out, that means it's armed, so be careful. If you cause a premature detonation, we're all dead. You can delay for a while, but try not to die." John said as he placed his hand on Major's shoulder. "Slap it when I give you the 'all clear' signal." John said as he left the M247 GPMG and a lot of ammo for it to Major. John picked up his M6C pistol and went to the landing zone with the rest of the companies. Out of four companies, two were surviving. Two merged companies, to be more precise. Less than one hundred and fifty men remain.

The Pelicans had arrived and the first load of five had already departed. John and Jessica agreed to take one of the last five

Pelicans. They carefully looked at Major, who was a bit delaying, but then he got up with the machine gun in his hands. He put the ammo pack on the gun and began firing on the Covenant, while the nuke was hidden behind his back.

"Major, you've been a good friend." John said his goodbyes to Major as he entered the Pelican with Jessica and the nurse.

"John, my name is Voro Mantakree." Major revealed his name to John, who wanted to know the real name of his Sangheili friend.

Voro took his last look at the departing Pelican squadron and he even managed to get a glimpse into John's eyes. He could see sadness of losing a friend and Voro dropped a tear, something he hasn't ever done. He dropped a tear from sadness, to never be able to see his family again, to never be able to see his kids anymore and never be able to see Sanghelios or Earth and not even his new best friends -- two humans.

Voro kept firing on the approaching Covenant forces and instead of an expected brigade, there were at least two divisions of Covenant forces incoming and they were already closer than two hundred meters. They could now put well-placed shots on Voro and they did, once his ammo ran out. Voro threw the machine gun in the way of the approaching Covenant, but some Jackals shot him in the leg and then in the chest, straight through his heart, before he could get in cover. Voro fell to the ground, but he took the HAVOK Warhead, even with his dying breath. He gathered enough strength to get up to his feet with the warhead in his hands.

"Voro Mantakree. Heretic. You shall perish from this Universe for your heresy and betrayal of your brothers! You betrayed us and when the Great Journey comes, you shall be left behind as all heretics will be." A Covenant Field Marshall spoke a speech to the dying Voro Mantakree in Sangheili language.

"Oh, I have definitely betrayed someone, but not my brothers. I have betrayed a friend for not showing him Sanghelios!" Voro Mantakree shouted out in clear Sangheili language. John whispered to him into coms that he can detonate the nuke.

"Voro, you can do it, goodbye, friend!"

"Ha! Humans cannot be friends of the pure! Those impure beings must die! They must be cleansed!" The Field Marshall spoke again, but nothing he could ever say, could convince Voro.

"Blindly following the lies of the Prophets will lead us all to death, and I will show you this today, right here and right now. Prepare to die." Voro said.

Voro Mantakree slapped the HAVOK Nuclear Warhead and the tip of it retracted in and after a second, detonating and creating a massive shockwave of a multi-megaton explosion.

"He gave his life for us, John, you know you would've done the same, but he stopped you!" Jessica tried to cheer John up, who was looking out the back of the Pelican's blood tray's small window and staring into the mushroom cloud., but nothing could do that. John lost his best friend. His best alien friend.

The twenty Pelicans were heading to the new command center of the 1st Army of Viery. There, they regrouped and met more Marines that were scattered from different areas in Viery territory.

"Marines, round up on me." John said through the coms to all UNSC Marines currently in the area.

The Marines immediately gathered around Lieutenant John. In total, about five hundred Marines gathered around him, while John was looking in his datapad. In it, there was a message from the General of the Marine Corps.

"\_You and your men are to immediately leave Reach. Our hold on the planet is slipping through our fingers and the more we fight while the planet gets bombarded, the more men we lose and the more men we lose, the lesser chance that we secure humanity's survival by defending Earth. So get your men out. That is a direct order, Marine!'"\_

John put his datapad away after reading the direct order and looked at all of the Marines.

"Any of you hold a rank higher than First Lieutenant?" John asked to be sure that he was highest ranking officer among them all.

"No, Sir. We've only got a Gunnery Sergeant or a Sergeant Major highestâ€œ" One Marine answered and John then looked up and noticed Pelicans landing next to them.

"Marines, we've got to get the hell out of Reach. All is lost and Reach is getting glassed. Our fleet is in full retreat and is being scattered around Epsilon Eridani in small battlegroups. We're evacuating in a Phoenix-class Colony Ship and we'll get up to it via Pelicans. Load in the Pelicans and let's go." John explained the situation and the order and every Marine complied. They loaded in the few dozen dropships and departed Reach to head for the unnamed Phoenix-class vessel.

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><p><strong>CFV-100, Phoenix-class Colony Ship, August 19<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 0311 hours by Local Time. Bridge.

><strong>"Has the last dropship landed?" John asked as soon as he entered the bridge of the vessel.

"Yes, Lieutenant. Our slipspace drive is also fully mounted in and we can spin it up to begin our FTL jump out of the system." The Ensign reported as he took his place by the Navigation computer on the bridge.

"Very well. Let's not outstay our welcome. Get us out of here, jump to the nearest star system." John said and with that, every window of the ship began closing and the ship entered slipspace, speeding towards the nearest star system that the UNSC haven't claimed or explored at all.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Well, Reach fell on August 30th Reach and with tens to hundreds of millions of UNSC military personnel dead and hundreds of warships destroyed along with an unknown number of civilians, but we all know what happened, don't we?<strong>

## 7. The Admiral and the Everest

\*\*Welcome back to Halo: Shock Trooper. This chapter features a very special character that disappeared during the middle of the Human-Covenant War. Enjoy.

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><p><strong>Slipspace, en-route to an unidentified system, CFV-100, September 3rd, 2552, 0633 hours by UTC. Bridge.<strong>

''Report, Ensign.'' Lieutenant Sandman said briskly once he entered the bridge and stalked towards the holo-table in the middle of the room. The holotable was surrounded by a mass of wires and screens, all running haphazardly throughout the room to various workstations where men and women worked diligently.

''Just a second, sir. I'm running a diagnostic of our navigation computer. We've been a bit off course for the last few hours.'' The Ensign replied to his superior officer while John studied the holo-table. A loud ping sung out from the table, jerking the nearby crew in surprise at the suddenness of it. The activated ping was showing two star systems â€“ Epsilon Eridani and the destination system with the ship, the CFV-100, almost inside the destination system.

''Done, Sir. Alright, the reportâ€| uhâ€| well, we are just two minutes away from dropping out of slipspace and exiting faster-than-light speeds. I am preparing to activate the sensors and radars once we drop out.'' The Ensign reported and John acknowledged his report.

''Very well.'' John said as he approached the observation window that was still sealed shut by blast shields. He stood in front of the glass thinking about Reach and how it was getting decimated in that short time of fighting. Most of all, he thought about Voro Mantakree's sacrifice for mankind.

''He was an alien, yet he gave his life for humanity. He once was part of the genocidal alien union known as the 'Covenant Empire'. Now he's glass and radioactive dust on Reachâ€| sometimes I wonder, will humans do the same for aliens? Giving their lives for the safety of othersâ€|'' John thought to himself to try and pass the time until the ship left slipspace, and pass the time it did.

John found himself standing in front of a window that wasn't sealed by blast doors anymore, but he could clearly see the inky black void of space colored by the occasional stars. With the blast shielding down, he could easily make out the garden world that hung in the void beside them. It seemed almost like a copy of Earth, but the continents were arranged differently and were different in shape. Water was covering roughly seventy percent of the planet, while surface was thirty percent, but there was no desert like the Sahara.

"Sir, there's somethingâ€| strange coming from the planetâ€| it's an Identify Friend/Foe system." The Ensign reported of his findings from viewing the radar and sensor data.

"What is it, Ensign?" John asked and approached the holo-table that had a hologram of the planet with the IFF beacon being processed. The hologram also had the CFV-100 placed in geosynchronous orbit above a small island a few hundred kilometers north of the equator.

The IFF beacon finally finished identifying. It was identified as the UNSC Everest, a Valiant-class Super Heavy Cruiser that served as the flagship of Vice Admiral Preston Jeremiah Cole â€" the man behind the Cole Protocol and the multiple naval successes that the UNSC scored early in the war.

"What is the Everest doing here? Shouldn't it be resting in pieces along with three hundred Covenant vessels at the Psi Serpentis system?" John was shocked to see the beacon of the Everest in this system.

"It could be an error, Sir. I'll re-scan the planet at once." The Ensign reported tersely. After a few seconds the man turned back around and shrugged, showing that he'd done all he could, but the anomaly was still there. "The ship seems to have landed in a jungle area sir, heavy foliage. We can't get a good view from here. It looks grown over though." Nodding at the ensign's words absently, John decided to speak his mind.

"If the first time can be a lie, the second is more likely the truth and the third is one hundred percent trueâ€| but I won't wait for the third scan. We must examine the ship immediately and see if it can be pulled back into orbit." John said as he left the bridge, leaving his XO in charge of the ship.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Planet side, 0701 hours by UTC.<strong>

Two Pelicans arrived on the planet surface in just a few minutes, immediately moving to hover next to the crash site of the large Valiant-class Cruiser â€" UNSC Everest. The ship looked like a Marathon-class Heavy Cruiser in many ways, but it was longer and larger, and without the triangle opening in its underbelly. Also armed with a larger number of 50mm Point-Defense Guns, Oversized Archer Missile pods and four MAC guns, a ship of this class was considered to be the most powerful cruiser ever utilized by humanity. It could stand toe-to-toe with multiple CCS-class Battlecruisers and emerge victorious, albeit with significant damage. Everest was just the best of the best, as it had the best officers aboard, like Admiral Preston J. Cole.

"Sir, it looks deserted. It has extensive hull damage and hasn't seen repairs in years. Some areas have massive holes in them." The pilot reported to Lieutenant Sandman. "There's a hangar open... and looks stable enough we can land in it."

"Land us there and keep the Pelican down." John issued his orders for the pilots.

''Acknowledged.'' The pilot set out and, after a time, set the dropship down in the hangar of the mortally wounded ship. They opened the troop bay's doors, allowing a squad of Marines under Lieutenant Sandman to exit and examine the vessel. The hangar bay was a mess. There were shattered bulkheads in any direction one cared to look, and more than a few of the doors looked fused shut as if by extreme heat. Large vines covered much of the walls, and the occasional flower helped undermine the feeling of death all around them.

''Alright Marines, divide into teams of three and spread out. Search the ship for any indication of what happened.'' Lieutenant Sandman gave the order and went along with his men.

''Sir, yes, Sir!'' The Marines replied and divided into five teams of three men each. The two pilots remained in the Pelican and kept its thrusters active.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Bridge, 0750 hours by UTC. UNSC Everest.<strong>

John and his team consisting of two Marines arrived outside the bridge that was, of course, in a lockdown. They didn't have a device for unlocking doors, so they decided to open the doors the good old-fashioned way â€“ blow the hell out of the doors.

''Marine, plant an explosive charge on that door.'' John ordered as he and another Marine took cover behind a nearby pillar. The Marine responsible for opening the doors finished placing the charge and fell back behind the Lieutenant. The charge soon exploded and forced John to close his eyes at the heat that rushed over him. The doors flew right out of their frame and across the entire bridge.

''Marine, I think the charge you used was a bit too powerful!'' John said as he looked at the damage. ''â€œ and I like it.'' John added and the two Marines fist-bumped.

''Oorah.'' One of them said, obviously loving the fact that his commanding officer was a badass ODST who enjoyed blowing stuff up.

''Scarecrow, check the computers for flight data.'' John gave an order to one of the Marines that went by the nickname ''Scarecrow''. He'd earned it by scaring away a group of Grunts from within a cornfield back on harvest.

''Right.'' The Marine replied and began searching for a working computer.

''What about me, Lieutenant?'' The other Marine asked as he stood at attention.

''Search for any clues of what happened around here.'' John issued his previous order and the Marine commenced executing it. While John and Scarecrow were searching for a working computer, they quickly realized the difficulty of their task. There were dozens of computers in the heavy cruiser, and it took a long while to find one in working order.

"Hey, I found it. It's barely working, but I got it online." Scarecrow shouted across the large bridge and Sandman immediately ran towards him.

"Show me what you've got." John said and approached the computer. It was a navigation computer, precisely the one they needed.

"The data's a bit corrupted, but we can easily piece out that the Everest made an in-atmosphere slippage jump to get to here, where it, after being seriously damaged, was pulled into the gravity well of the planet and crash landed." Scarecrow explained the data to Lieutenant Sandman.

"Marine, get your ass by the door." John said to the other marine as he got ready to leave the ship.

Scarecrow frowned suddenly, and began squinting at the data he scrolled through in fascination.

"Holy shit... Sir, I know where to find them. According to this they're they could still be alive!" Scarecrow choked out in amazement.

"Where Scarecrow? How long ago was this data filed?"

"Looks like... about nine years ago."

"Grab a copy of that and take it with us. We're leaving."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>D-77TC "Pelican", 0820 hours by UTC.<strong>

"Sir, are you sure that they won't be hostile? I just want a few days off of combat for now." One of the more demoralized Marines spoke in the Pelican and John approached him.

"Marine, I'll personally send you to an exotic vacation hotel after we get to Earth." John calmed the Marine down when he gave a promise.

"Thank you, Sir." The Marine responded and calmed down. John, seeing that all the Marines are calm and don't have any problems and are just talking to each other, went to the pilot's cabin to see how far they had to go.

"Far?" The Lieutenant asked as soon as he came in.

"No, Lieutenant. Look, right there. We're going to land just outside the village, so get your men ready to secure the area around the el zee." The pilot of the Pelican said and John turned to his men.

"Get ready, Marines. Anyone or anything that fires at us is considered hostile from this point on." John warned the Marines and as soon as the Pelican landed, the fifteen Marines plus John, their officer, ran outside and immediately established a perimeter. They sat there in their perimeter, waiting for an ambush, some were even begging to have an ambush instead of political bullshit that might

occur when dealing with people that moved away from the UNSC.

"El tee, I see someone coming up to us." Scarecrow informed the Lieutenant about an approaching person.

"Human or alien?" Sandman asked as he came closer to Scarecrow to see where he noticed the person.

"Human, Sir." Scarecrow responded and John got up on his feet and approached the human that was coming to meet the squad.

"An ODST. Long haven't I seen one." The human said and John began observing him. He looked elderly, in his eighties, wearing UNSC Navy Admiral's pants and boots, but instead of a coat, he was wearing a simple farmer shirt.

"Preston Jeremiah Cole, I presume?" John Sandman said and holstered his MA37 behind his back.

"Exactly. What brings you to our peaceful colony, Marine? Has the war ended?" The elderly human asked as he was most curious.

"No. In fact, we're still on the verge of extinction. Reach has fallen and the Covenant can make a clean jump towards Earth and when they do, we all will die." John said as he looked with anger towards the once proud Admiral Cole.

"I am sorry, but there was nothing I could do!" The Admiral replied.

"Stand down, Marines. We're in friendly territory." Sandman ordered and all the Marines stood down, holstering their weapons. He then turned back to talk with the Admiral and find out his reasons, before he could depart and scavenge the Everest for valuable supplies.

"Why'd you do it, Admiral? You could've lead humanity against the Covenant and we would've turned the tide around, beating the Covenant to their homeworlds! Your personal fleet inflicted the highest possible amount of casualties upon the Covenant, imagine what you could've done in the years to come? Reach and its population of seven hundred million wouldn't have been turned to burning glass! Earth wouldn't be at danger." John asked the Admiral and informed him of the repercussions of this decision that he made.

"I did it, because I was tired of war, son! I was tired of constant bloodshed, I just! I couldn't take it anymore!" The Admiral replied with deep emotions and sadness, and his hand slipped into his pocket where it pulled out a small keycard.

"Son, please, don't add us into any UNSC maps and don't report of this incident, please! we just want to live in peace!" The Admiral tried protecting his little farming colony and John, seeing as how many people suffer from this war, wanted to spare them the pain and agreed to help.

"Alright, Sir, I won't do anything about this, but I can't say for sure an ONI ship doesn't find you." John said and then almost turned around, but Cole stopped him by grabbing him by his arm. He gave the small keycard to him and John took it from him.

''What's this?'' John asked while he looked at that keycard.

''It's my personal keycard. It allows you access to locked down areas on the Everest, like two of the hangar bays that contain heavy support aircraft. Take them, loot the Everest, we won't use it anymore anyways!'' The Admiral said and John turned around again to head towards the Pelican.

''Good luck, son, and keep humanity safe.'' The Admiral said silently. He kept looking at the UNSC Pelican taking off from the ground and being escorted by another Pelican. They were heading up in the orbit.

''Crew, we'll need to scavenge the Everest before we depart the system. It contains valuable supplies, aircraft and vehicles for us to use, as far as I know.'' John informed everyone aboard the Phoenix-class, CFV-100. The Pelican pilots understood that they had to go back to the crashed super heavy cruiser and the crew in the bridge of the CFV-100 realized that they had to engage in an atmospheric entry to ensure a quick transportation of all supplies and vehicles.

Three hours later, 1145 hours by UTC, September 3rd, 2552. CFV-100's Bridge.

''Lieutenant, all Marines report that the Everest is looted and its navigational computer data has been erased along with all traces of its AI that went rampant some years ago. Also, there is a list of all the items and vehicles taken from the once mighty ship.'' The Ensign reported and gave John a datapad containing the list of everything taken.

\_10 units of AC-220 ''Vulture'' Gunships.\_

\_20 units of M808 ''Scorpion'' Main Battle Tanks, 6 of them are the 105mm variants.\_

\_4 units of D-77TC ''Pelican'' dropships. 1 is badly damaged.\_

\_42 units of M12 ''Warthog'' Force Application Vehicles with all modifications.\_

\_1 unit of a Shaw-Fujikawa Translight Engine.\_

\_2399 units of oversized Archer missiles.\_

\_1 unit of a Shiva-class Thermonuclear missile.\_

\_19534 blocks of 50mm Point Defense Gun ammunition.\_

\_23 TB of combat and navigational data from 2525 to 2543.\_

\_63 tons of small-arms ammunition ranging from Magnum-type pistols and rifles up to Anti-Material Sniper Rifles and rocket launchers.\_

\_1391 small-arms weapon (SRS-99AM Sniper Rifles, MA5B Assault Rifles, M90 Shotguns, BR55 Battle Rifles, M6C Magnums, MA37 Assault Rifles, M7/Caseless SMGs and M392 Designated Marksman Rifles, 1 Model 99

Special Application Scoped Rifle)\_

\_2 units of GA-TL1 Longsword-class Interceptors.\_

John finished reading and was intrigued. The amount of items in the ship in good condition was surprising.

''Ensign, get us in orbit and engage in an immediate slipspace jump to Earth.'' John gave the order and the Ensign immediately began executing, but, unbeknownst to Lieutenant Sandman, the Ensign ran another scan of the system to be triple sure that there are no Covenant or UNSC or any other alien ships in here that could recognize them and, possibly, try to destroy them. His precautions were justified, because the CFV-100 was outfitted with guns that weren't meant for battles and its MAC guns weren't fitted on.

''Sir, I have to ask though, what shall we name our ship? We have some paint onboard and before we depart, we could paint the name of the ship on the sides.'' The Ensign asked his commanding Marine.

''Hmâ€| hold the departure for now.'' John ordered and contacted a team of UNSC Marines onboard the ship.

Thirty minutes later.

The CFV-100 left orbit of the farming colony with a new name. The CFV-100 was named ''Fire of Humanity'' when it departed the Earth-like farming colony.

''UNSC Fire of Humanity's double slipspace core system active and ready, Sir.'' The Ensign reported in and John immediately turned his chair to look at the bridge's main observation window that was in the front of it.

''Make the jump to Earth.'' John ordered and the Ensign punched in the coordinates for Earth, and immediately activated the slipspace drive, along with closing the blast shields for all windows, sending the ship into the cold black of slipspace.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Sorry that some parts in the chapter might get a bit vague or something like that, but I was really playing a lot recently and working hard, so, anyways, I hope you did enjoy the chapter, even if it was shorter than I expected (Or possibly even YOU, who knows?). Anyways - review, review oh... and, review again. If you like this story, don't miss out on the chance to follow andor favorite it.\*\*

## 8. The Rebel Strike

\*\*Welcome to another part of Halo: Shock Troopers. I don't want to spoil any of you, before you finish reading, but all I can say is, it takes place in the United Republic of North America. Enjoy!

><strong>

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Sol System, September 8th, 2552, 1933 hours by UTC. Earth's orbit.<br>\*\*Earth's orbit was filled with hundreds of civilian starships and freighters, as well as three hundred orbital defense platforms that were still being constructed by the Engineers of the Navy. More than a hundred ships were patrolling the entire system, including the outer planets, like Pluto.

The usual rhythm of refugee flows was disturbed when an unscheduled in-system slipspace jump was finished. UNSC's long-range radar systems immediately recognized it as a UNSC Phoenix-class Colony Ship, the CFV-100, which was recently finished over Reach, just before the planet's total destruction. Two Marathon-class Heavy Cruisers and nine Charon-class Light Frigates were sent towards it. The small fleet tasked with examining the CFV-100 approached it, turned around to follow it, and immediately contacted it. They had two Pelicans sent to observe its bridge and scan for human life forms.

''Charlie Foxtrot Victor Dash One Zero Zero, if you are under human control and if you are sure there are no Covenant pursuers, please acknowledge this message immediately.'' The commanding officer of the task force, a Rear Admiral, sent a message to the Phoenix-class Colony Ship, before noticing a name on its side wing structure. It was painted on like on every UNSC ship and it clearly read ''Fire of Humanity''.

''This is the UNSC ship ''Fire of Humanity''. We acknowledge your message and we are looking to dock with Earth's shipyards. Do we have permission to proceed?'' The commanding officer of the ''Fire of Humanity'' chimed in response to the Rear Admiral and the voice seemed familiar to him.

''First Lieutenant John Sandman. Glad to see you're alive. You have permission to proceed, head on to Earth Shipyard Alpha Two. The engineering crew will be waiting for you there.'' The Rear Admiral informed and then disconnected from the COM Channel and entered his task force's COM Channel.

''UNSC Charon and UNSC Darkness are to escort the Fire of Humanity. The rest of the force must return back to Luna with my ship.'' The Rear Admiral said, ordering two Charon-class Light Frigates to escort the massive two and a half kilometer Colony Ship.

''Yes, Sir.'' The Lieutenant Commander of the Charon answered in a disciplined tone.

''Sir, it will be done, Sir.'' The Commander of the Darkness acknowledged the order immediately after the Lieutenant Commander of Charon did.

Shortly after the conversations of the task force's COM Channel ended, the force divided, leaving the two frigates with the Fire of Humanity.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Fire of Humanity, Bridge, 1941 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*John was peeking out of the observation window that was directly in front of the bridge of the ship. He was seeing the Luna

get larger and larger, which meant that they were getting closer to Earth, their destination. Looking at the stars blink, he realized the Covenant could be anywhere right now and they could strike at any moment, so he didn't want to get caught off guard, but he, in fact, was caught off guard, though not by the genocidal alien union, but by the Office of Naval Intelligence.

Three agents of ONI had landed onboard the ship, without Lieutenant Sandman knowing it. When they appeared on the bridge, the atmosphere suddenly changed for every crewman operating their stations. The air seemed cold, as there was no emotion on the faces of any of the agents and all of them seemed to be staring directly at Lieutenant Sandman.

"First Lieutenant John Sandman, you are coming with us for a private interrogation." One of the agents, a stunning female in her mid-twenties, said with a cold tone and without any emotion.

"What for?" Sandman demanded to know as he became angry, frowned and clutched his hands into fists. He never liked ONI as they kept too many secrets from the military.

"We have received information that you were befriending the enemy. We must question you, your motives and what did you reveal to the enemy." The female agent replied to John's demand. John slowly turned around to face her directly.

"We have clearance from United Nations Space Command Fleet Command to interrogate you, and if needed, put you in a cell for treason." The agent replied once more and then offered her hand, a sign that it's time to leave. John took his last look behind, at the front of the ship, seeing that it's already docking with the dry dock.

"Fine." John surrendered to ONI's custody and went along with them. "Ensign, tell everyone that they get shore leave." Sandman informed his XO just before leaving the bridge through one of the two doors and large monitor that was placed between the two doors at the back of the bridge suddenly activated, showing a camera feed from one of the hangar bays. In the hangar bay, there was clearly an ONI Pelican landed. It had black stripes running in a slight angle down its hull and with ONI's symbol painted on the sides, it really was not a sight to see on any UNSC ship.

The silence aboard the bridge was disturbed when Second Lieutenant Parisa and Second Lieutenant Jessica Mackenzie entered it. The two girls were gossiping about things, but upon entering the bridge, they felt the unusual quiet thriving there.

"John? Johnâ€| where are you?" Jessica tried calling for John, but then one of the crewmen sitting by the weapons consoles turned his chair around to reply to the young female ODST desperately trying to locate the First Lieutenant.

"Ma'am, he's been taken by ONI to interrogation." The officer informed the higher ranking woman who was standing in her black ODST Battle Dress Uniform in the middle of the bridge, clueless of what to do. Then, she suddenly realized that ONI is after John because he had befriended the Sangheili Major â€" Voro Mantakree.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>The Pentagon, United Republic of North America, Earth, 2033 hours by UTC.<strong>

>John was kept inside a jail cell, about five hundred meters below the Pentagon building where a secret ONI Interrogation facility was built. The air was very cold in the facility and John couldn't hear a thing outside of his cell, even though it clearly had an opening. He became worried, but didn't show any expression on the outside.<p>

Suddenly, and just as John had expected, an ONI agent came in the cell with a simple chair made of wood. He placed the chair in front of John Sandman and sat down on it, crossing his legs and pulling out a pack of cigarettes. He put a cigarette in his mouth, put the pack in his jacket and pulled out a lighter, lighting the cigarette with it and taking a smoke.

''First Lieutenant John Sandman. Veteran of the UNSC Marine Corps Special Forcesâ€| a traitorâ€|'' The agent said in a calm tone, looking in a file that was in his hand, while smoking his cigarette at the same time.

''You know what this is, son? Execution. You signed your own death warrant!'' The agent said with his tone slightly rising. John simply sat silently with a blank expression, looking at what the agent throws at him.

''You're just going to sit there, aren't you?'' The agent said as he threw his chair aside and stood up in a fury. The chair that he sat on a while ago was thrown in a wall and it broke apart in many pieces.

''SPEAK! How do you justify collaboration with the enemy that wishes to destroy us all?!!'' The agent got out of his mind, as he was in a fury and was literally starting to spit while talking. John simply sat, keeping his blank expression up and his mouth shut. Whatever he might say, ONI will turn it against him, one way or another.

''Fine. I guess a few days in this room will soften you up.'' The agent finally gave up and his rage slowly passed away and he left, shutting the doors with force, but due to his anger, he forgot to lock the doors.

After a while of looking around, John noticed that his arms weren't properly cuffed, so he used that opportunity to carefully remove the handcuffs.

''Damnâ€| whoever filmed that will get his ass whooped.'' John said as he wanted to get revenge on the one who snitched him to ONI, but John didn't take into account the possibility that the person who betrayed him was dead. While John was thinking, he finally got the cold cuffs off of his hands and his hands felt a lot better. Now, with confidence that he can escape and get out, he slowly opened the doors, but noticed an ONI agent patrolling the area. John immediately hid behind the wall inside his room. John then took another look and noticed the agent coming back and decided to use this opportunity to clear the area.

When the agent got closer to John's room, the ODST sneaked up to him

from behind, grabbed his neck and violently snapped it. Then, after snapping the neck, he rammed it into the wall with pure strength. After making sure the agent is dead, he threw him into the cell and slowly began moving forward through a series of large hallways containing dozens of rooms like the one that John was forced in.

"'Let go of me, man, I didn't do nothing, bro.'" An African-American UNSC Marine, dressed in the M52B Marine Battle Dress Uniform, but without the CH252 helmet making his clearly shaven head visible, shouted across a hallway in which John was hiding. He was being dragged by two ONI agents across the hallway and John, seeing this sight, clutched his arms into a fist and ran out of cover, running straight at the two agents.

He caught the two completely by surprise as the Marine's shouting was keeping them distracted from the incoming footsteps. John, straight after getting in range of a punch, made a powerful punch against the furthest agent, forcing him to fall down. The other one, shocked, tried to respond with a stun baton, but his baton was taken, his arm snapped out of place while the agent was turned around, his back facing John, and he was kicked into the nearest wall, where he fell out of consciousness. The other agent, trying to get back up, was forced down when the African-American Marine punched him in the jaw and again directly in the face, knocking him out.

"'Hey thanks, homie'" The African-American Marine thanked his savior. "'â€œthese ONI guys were about to kill me, just because I was trying my luck with a girl.'" The Marine explained why he was dragged here, while his savior, John, was examining the outfit of the agents as they seemed a bit off with standard ONI regulations.

"'Wait, homie, ain't you that guy who has survived many battles in the war and led your Marines straight towards victory, despite the odds? Ain't you the guy who successfully defended Luyten while being massively outnumbered?'" The Marine seemed to recognize Lieutenant Sandman.

"'That's meâ€œ but look here, Marine. Look at this symbol.'" John called the Marine closer so that he may look at the agent's outfit.

"'Nah, man, I don't want to look in his pants!'" The Marine exclaimed when John placed his hand over the agent's pants, but next to the pocket where he felt a piece of paper. He slipped his hand in the pocket and pulled out papers containing identification of an ONI agent. He checked the papers and noticed that their validity ended in 2540, implying that these agents are not really from ONI.

"'Are you seeing this, Marine? They're acting like ONI, trying to take us for foolsâ€œ'" John explained as he clutched his hand into a fist, again, with the papers in his hand.

"'Yeah, yeah, I see it. Look, I think I saw an armory not far from here. If we get guns, we can breach out of here, because without a fight, there's no way out.'" The Marine informed his new commanding officer.

"'Marine, what's your name and rank?'" John asked for the Marine's identity while picking up a stun baton.

''Sir, Gunnery Sergeant William Mitchell of the Marine Corps 1st Marine Division. I was stationed in California before the ONI agents dragged me away.'' Gunnery Sergeant Mitchell explained as he slowly inhaled and exhaled his breath.

''Welcome to the 105th, Mitchell, because you are now under my direct command. We're getting the fuck out.'' Lieutenant John explained as he looked around the steel-colored hallways, looking for stairs or an elevator. He kept looking around until he located a serviceable elevator.

''There, let's go.'' John pointed at an elevator and the two Marines immediately ran for it. As soon as they reached it, it opened by itself and the two ran straight inside of it. John slammed a button on the elevator and it immediately went up with their destination being the top floor. The Pentagon.

''Pentagon?'' John asked the Gunnery Sergeant right next to him. He never really had the opportunity to look outside of the Pelican.

''I don't know, Sir, but if it's the Pentagon, then shit must be real.'' Mitchell answered to his new CO with confidence that something is not as it seems.

''Sir, I remember one of those agents talking about blowing up the Pentagon while a HIGHCOM meeting is in place. To effectively dissolve the UNSC's military command.'' Mitchell informed his Lieutenant, with deep hatred for anyone who would want to destroy the UNSC's military while it is struggling to keep humanity alive.

''They might be rebels that believe the Covenant are attacking only the UNSC, not humanity as a whole. Oh boy, they haven't watched the news in twenty seven years!'' John immediately thought about some rebels that might believe in lies that their leaders thought up. He was disgusted at the thought of humans fighting humans again, especially in a war for the survival of mankind. ''But that doesn't explain one of them, an agent who questioned me for friendship with an Elite.''

''I agree, the rebels are most likely involved and since they don't recognize anything UEG and UNSC related, they don't watch any news. Most likely they listen only to rumors.'' Mitchell added to John's idea about the rebels. While they were discussing about the rebel struggle to destroy their own race, the elevator finished going up and was at the first floor of the Pentagon. As soon as the doors opened, they noticed plastic explosives planted across the entire hallway.

''Holy shit! RUN!'' John was shocked to see such a sight and immediately yelled out an order to immediately leave the building. They ran towards the nearest windows and smashed through them with their armored bodies and with some pieces of glass still stuck in their armor.

When they landed on the asphalt right outside the Pentagon, the HIGHCOM's officers immediately noticed them while heading towards the main entrance.

''What's going on here?'' Fleet Admiral Lord Terrence Hood asked to

his fellow high ranking officers.

''RUN THE FUCK AWAY! THERE ARE BOMBS!'' Gunnery Sergeant Mitchell shouted out and ran away, but John ran towards the Admirals and Generals and ran away with them. Everyone was running as fast as they could, but Lord Hood tripped and fell on the ground just two hundred meters from the building. John immediately covered the Admiral with his own body to protect the Admiral from the explosion and exactly at the same time, the explosives went off, destroying two floors of the Pentagon and engulfing the rest of the building in a large fire.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>One minutes later, Pentagon parking lot, Earth, 2122 hours by UTC, 1622 hours by URNA Eastern Coast time.<br>\*\*John slowly got up to his feet and looked behind him at the burning Pentagon and the UNSC flags that were engulfed in flames and burning away.

''Ughâ€| what the hellâ€|'' Lord Hood said while he put his palms directly on his eyes, covering them from the brightness of the flames. John offered him a hand to help him get up and Lord Hood accepted it, getting up on his feet with the Lieutenant's help.

''Lieutenant Sandman, you alright man?'' Sergeant Mitchell ran to the Lieutenant's side to check if he hasn't been mortally wounded.

''No, it's alright, I'm fine.'' John replied and looked back towards the flame when he noticed three Pelicans in ONI colors flying away. He immediately used his HUD to zoom in on the middle one and noticed the agent that interrogated him along with humans dressed in ONI suits, but with a symbol of a red fist in the air.

''An ONI agent working with the rebels?'' John said as he felt a hand on his shoulder and when he turned around, he saw four ONI agents behind him. These were real, as they were showing their documents.

''Agent Rowland, ONI Counter-Infiltration Ops.'' An agent of ONI introduced herself to the Lieutenant. ''We have a traitor in our ranks, who has an extreme case of xenophobia and hatred towards the UEG and the UNSC because the UNSC could not save his home colony and his family. He used to work in ONI's Section Three, until we deleted him from every database, removing him from existence for his betrayal.'' The agent explained a situation that is now within ONI.

''What did he do?'' Lieutenant Sandman asked the ONI agent that looked at him through her sunglasses with a built-in HUD.

''It's strictly classified, but I can tell you that it was sabotage.'' She revealed a little bit of information that wasn't classified, as she looked down on her hand with a necklace in her hand and a wedding ring. ''That traitor, was also my husband.'' Agent Rowland said as she clutched her arm into a fist and began dropping tears. The three agents stood still as if they didn't even notice anything, until one of them came to her to comfort her.

''Sorry, Lieutenant, she has trouble going past that part of her

life.'' Another agent, a tall male with a muscular build, said as he approached the Lieutenant.

''Don't cry. Be strong.'' The agent who was comforting Rowland said, silently.

''Well, what can we do to help?'' Lieutenant Sandman said, after looking to Gunnery Sergeant Mitchell.

''Since your ship is being refitted with the top of the line armaments and armor as well as hallway designs, you will have to help us locate that SOB who dared to betray humanity at such an important point in our history.'' The muscular agent said as he handed a data chip to Lieutenant Sandman.

''Here's all the data you need, including his supposed hideouts. ONI doesn't have the available military manpower for operations such as these, so we rely on you, Lieutenant. Get your men together and search for him and his pals. Bring him down or take him alive, that choice is up to you.'' The agent said and turned around along with the rest of his ONI comrades and they left towards a District of Columbia Protective Services Police Department D77-TC Pelican colored in blue stripes that were painted horizontally on the sides.

''Hmâ€¦ interesting. If you had a shore leave planned, Lieutenant, it's over now.'' Lord Hood commented as he pulled out a silver eagle, the Colonel's rank patch, from his pocket.

''First Lieutenant John Sandman. For your recent actions, I am promoting you directly to the rank of Colonel. I am skipping so many ranks for you, because the UNSC is lacking many qualified officers and with this rank, you are able to command the Fire of Humanity without any commissioned officer telling you what you must execute.'' Lord Hood said as instead of a ceremonial situation, he decided to award the Lieutenant right on the spot. After he gave the Colonel's patch to John, an explosion ripped apart another part of the Pentagon and immediately after, a large fire brigade arrived to extinguish the flames.

''I'll do my best to find him, Sir.'' Lieutenant Sandman, now Colonel Sandman, said with a steely determination, giving a promise that he will find the traitor and he immediately saluted with his right hand. ''Mitchell, let's get a ride back up to the Humanity.'' Colonel Sandman ordered his new Sergeant and waved his hand, while Lord Hood and the rest of the Admirals of the UNSC watched the flames caused by the rebels.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>So, hope you liked it. Anyways, short summary, the UNSC had a rebel within it's intelligence branch that almost killed the entire military leadership of humanity's survival effort. That rebel and his friends most likely believe that the Covenant are waging war against UNSC only, not the entire human race, but they will be sadly mistaken when the invasion comes. So, don't forget to leave a review and followfavorite the story if you really like it.\*\*

\*\*Hey everyone. Bringing another chapter for Halo: Shock Troopers to you. This chapter features a very traumatic event for John Sandman and I really hope you enjoy the chapter.

><strong>

\* \* \*

><p><strong>September 10th, 2552, UNSC Fire of Humanity, Briefing Room. 1000 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*Every officer, sitting in seats in their officer dress uniforms, in charge of at least a platoon sized unit was called to the Briefing Room of the ship for a briefing of their new mission, but apparently, their commanding officer â€“ Colonel Sandman â€“ was missing for a bit too long.

''He's not here. He should've been here thirty minutes ago.'' A Second Lieutenant said, while having a conversation with his superior, a Captain.

''Damn it guys, I need to take a shower right now!'' Another officer whined across the room when suddenly Colonel Sandman entered the room together with Second Lieutenant Jessica Mackenzie and Gunnery Sergeant William Mitchell. Every officer in the room stood up in attention.

''Ten-hut!'' The highest ranking officer in the room, a Major, announced immediately after the Colonel entered the room.

''At ease.'' John announced as he approached the large holo-table in the middle of the briefing room.

''Alright men!'' John said as he inserted a data chip into the table and a hologram popped out. The hologram quickly formed the shape of planet Earth and marked a few important spots with red dots. ''â€“this is our mission. We have to capture or kill a rogue ONI agent who is collaborating with rebels. Their goals may be entirely different, but apparently, due to hatred towards the UNSC, they are working together without any flaws. The areas marked in red are his supposed hideouts on Earth. There aren't many of them, but most are located in desolate areas that aren't populated.'' John briefed with a description of the mission, without involving any emotion or mention of the sudden attack on the Pentagon.

''Sir, what opposition can we expect?'' A Captain asked for an evaluation of enemy forces.

''Well, a few civilian trucks improved with machine guns, at least a platoon sized unit in each area andâ€“'' John was digging through the intel, trying to see anything else worth mentioning, but there were only details. ''â€“ that's it.''

''Alright, Sir.'' The Captain acknowledged the report on enemy forces.

''Alright, this is how we'll roll in. Since Lord Hood has been so generous and transferred most of you to my ship along with your men and formed the 57th Shock and 58th Armored Regiments, we'll combine the forces a bit and send you down together. Captain Andrews, you and your company, along with the 756th Platoon will drop down in Siberia, Russia. Get dressed accordingly. Major Vorshevsky, you will be dropping in Alaska with your entire battalion. Resistance is expected

to be high in there, so I want you down there. Captain Lee, get your men to the Swiss Alps, there should be a base right in the mountainsâ€œ!'' John continued briefing the officers of their missions for a while, explaining what they had to do and what they should avoid to do.

''Ah, Sir, what if they have nukes?'' One of the officers raised a valid point.

''A valid point, Lieutenant. If they have nukes, you'll just have to either disarm them, or get the fuck away as fast as you can!'' John answered to the officer's question. ''Or, you can always get a NEST team.'' John added to his own answer with a smile on his face. John's hand quickly went for the data chip that was inserted into the holo-table and he removed it from there. The holo-table's holographic display flickered until it disappeared entirely. The lighting on the room turned a bit brighter and on the monitors in the briefing room, the UNSC's symbol started rotating alongside ONI's symbol with the text ''Joint Security Operation'' under both symbols, inclining that ONI was also involved.

''Sir, I've noticed ONI symbols. Are ONI agents going to accompany us?'' Major Vorshevsky asked with his Russian accent and confusion on his face, as he expected this mission to be a Marine-only mission.

''Yes. There will be one intelligence agent per each location. I am sorry, but ONI insisted.'' John excused himself in front of the Marine officers, who forgave him.

''That's alright, we forgive you. If it's a rogue ONI agent they want, we'll give them one.'' Captain Lee said, revealing his strong Chinese accent, as he had never spoken a lot. Only to his men.

''Is everything clear, brothers?'' John asked, referring to his officers as his brothers in arms.

''Sir, yes, Sir!'' The officers shouted in unison just as soon as John saluted to all of them.

''Be safe and be strong.'' John said while keeping his hand close to his forehead, keeping the salute. ''You may leave and get ready.'' He said and left the briefing room to head for the bridge.

While walking towards the bridge, he was talking with Gunnery Sergeant William Mitchell and his girlfriend, Mackenzie.

''Mitchell, can you operate the SRS-99?'' John asked while walking towards the bridge armory, instead of the bridge itself.

''Uhâ€œ! yes I can, though I'm not a professional sniper.'' William Mitchell replied and as soon as the trio entered the bridge armory, John threw Mitchell an SRS-99 AM sniper rifle.

''Sir?'' Mitchell asked as he didn't quite understand what the Colonel had in mind.

''There's another area I haven't told anyone about, but intel is almost non-existent about that place, so I need a sniper team down there to examine the area and report of any suspicious activity. You

and Jessica will be heading down to the Russian far eastern coast for some recon. The Eighty Ninth Shock Company will be on stand-by to drop when you have a confirmation of the target.'' John explained and gave a holo-still of the target â€“ the rogue ONI agent who sided with the rebels. The agent didn't seem to excel physically, because he looked more like a scientist.

''Uhâ€œ| alrightâ€œ| I'll try not to screw up.'' Mitchell said, while believing that he is too shaky for this mission. ''Ma'am, after you.'' He said, allowing the higher ranking Lieutenant go first.

John then left the armory and went to the bridge. As soon as he entered the bridge, he was met by the young Ensign Charles Lowell, now Commander Charles Lowell, because he was promoted as well to be an executive officer of the ship.

''Sir, our new weapons systems are being installed faster than we anticipated. At this rate, all of our weapons and the new armor design would be finished by the start of October.'' Commander Lowell explained as he began following the Colonel across the large bridge that was filled with wires, while it was being refitted with some newer technologies.

''What weapon systems do we have online at the moment?'' John asked as he sat down on his chair that was right in front of the holo-table, with the table itself being in the middle of the bridge.

''Sir, we have our 50 millimeter point defense guns operational. Currently, there are eighty of those. Also, two hundred oversized Archer missile pods with sixty missiles in each pod. In ammo storage, we have about twelve thousand Archer missiles. Currently, close to being brought online are the forty heavy deck guns that we can use for orbital bombardment and thirty missile turrets through which we can fire additional missiles against Covenant ships.'' The Commander gave an armament report, but the Colonel knew that it wasn't the whole report, so he demanded to know the rest.

''What about the MAC system?'' John asked, while putting his hand on his chin, where he felt a stubble that has grown a bit.

''Sir, the MAC system is also fully operational, though only one cannon out of two. We'll have Carrier-class Magnetic Accelerator Cannons installed in addition to a secondary deuterium fusion generator to power the ship more effectively. Also, we'll get four nuclear missile pods on our ship and we'll be loaded with sixteen Shiva-class tactical nuclear missiles along with four HAVOK tactical nuclear weapons.'' Commander Lowell reported, enthusiastically, as reading about this armament only made him even happier and sure that the Fire of Humanity would lead the UNSC to a naval victory.

''What about the armor and other defenses? What do we get in that category?'' John asked as he too was very cheerful of the amount of weapons that Lord Hood and Fleet Admiral Harper, along with ONI, have donated to the Phoenix-class Colony Ship.

''Sir, our hallways are being reinforced with honeycombed bracing structure. This will take a while to finish, but it will protect the ship from extreme amounts of damage. Also, the ship's armor is being

increased from one and a half meter to entire three meters of Titanium-A battleplating. Critical areas will get a bit more, of course, like any other ship, but mainly it's three meters. We'll also get an AI that's being assembled by ONI somewhere in Australia.'' The Commander finished the armaments report and stood by the Colonel, waiting for him to speak.

''Interesting. Any reports about strike craft, or any other changes?'' Colonel Sandman asked, wanting to know if there is anything else new about the ship.

''Yes, Sir. The entire class is renamed from Colony Ships to Battlecruisers. The Phoenix-class Battlecruiser. Also, the ship's new emblem is ready, though the emblem's text is not. Maybe you can decide what should we place in the text area?'' Commander Lowell said as he activated the monitor on the back end of the bridge. The emblem of the ship appeared on it.

The emblem was made of a circle as background, and a red Phoenix from the side, charging downwards, with its glorious wings spread out and its legs visible. The name of the ship being on top of the circle and the hull identification number being on the bottom. The sides had room for the text of the emblem.

''Libertas Per Ignis.'' John said while looking through a dictionary on a datapad. It translates from Latin as ''Freedom Through Fire'', literally what mankind is passing through right now to gain its freedom from the genocidal maniacs in the Covenant.

''Sir, I'll put it on right away.'' Commander Lowell said as he tinkered with a nearby console, correcting the emblem. Slowly, the words ''Libertas Per Ignis'' were drawn on the sides of the emblem and the emblem began spinning as a 3D animation.

John loved the new emblem for the ship, in fact, he even wanted to stick the emblem to his ODST battle dress uniform's shoulder pads.

''Colonel, this is Major Vorshevsky. Approaching target area in two minutes. Do you confirm visual on us from orbit and from live feed?'' Major Vorshevsky began the communications with the Colonel. John immediately went towards the monitor and switched it to video mode. The holo-table was activated and a holographic display of a UNSC armored convoy heading towards an area marked as a red dot appeared.

The monitor showed live feed from Major Alexander Semyonovich Vorshevsky's helmet-mounted camera. There was text on the bottom right corner of the screen.

\_MAJ A. S. Vorshevsky, 159\_th\_Armored Battalion, 57\_th\_Shock Regiment.

>Blood Type: B-POS<br>UNSC Fire of Humanity  
>NATIONALITY: Russian<br>HOME PLANET: Mars\_

The text, really, was just a short bio of the Major, himself.

''Confirmed, Major. Proceed on course and report of any unusual activity.'' John reported as he made sure that the live feed and

satellite scan were working properly.

"'Tak tochno, Ser. Vorshevsky out.'" Vorshevsky acknowledged John's report in Russian and immediately ended coms to focus on the mission at hand.

"'John, why haven't we had an evening just between the two of us in a while?'" Jessica opened a silent and encrypted COM channel directly to John. John seemed to get nervous by the thought of dating, again. He had lost his way with girls during the course of the war.

"'Sorry, I justâ€| ahâ€| sorry, Jessica. Iâ€| how did we get here? I am not the man I might've been back when I was six years younger. Now, I am a Marineâ€| I really don't see neither the time for that, neither do I have the thoughtsâ€| sorry.'" John apologized himself for his lack of romantic moves towards Jessica and she understood that as she herself was an officer of the UNSC.

"'Yeahâ€| I understandâ€| oh, wait! We see him! John, we see him! What should we do with the tar-'" Jessica's question never entirely reached John's communicator as the ONI agent hacked the COM channel and the monitor, accessing the communications of the entire battlecruiser.

"'UNSC bastards, you will neverâ€| NEVERâ€| take me alive!'" The rogue agent said, and the video began clearing up in the monitor. John's head turned towards it literally at the speed of light. The agent was holding a detonator in his hand and a captured HAVOK Tactical Nuclear Weapon with a single megaton yield behind him, held by two rebels next to a cave.

"'Goodbye, Miss Mackenzie, Mister Mitchell. And you, Sandman, I hope you burn in hell for your loyalty to these liars and friendship to those alien fucks!'" The agent said and pressed the detonator.

"'NO!'" John shouted across the bridge when the video communications were cut and a thermonuclear explosion occurred in far eastern Russia, luckily not touching any major population centers.

John dropped on his knees, because he knew Jessica was caught in the blast. John had tears bursting out of his eyes and running down his cheeks. The whole bridge crew was deeply saddened, but when they noticed their Commanding Officer on his knees on the cold floor, crying, they were shocked. Even the engineers working on the refits in the bridge were shocked.

There was silence in the bridge for a long while, but the only sound was John trying to control his emotions, lock them down. After that while, Commander Lowell approached his superior officer to help him out somehow.

"'Get the fuck away from me.'" John literally tossed his XO aside with a swift move of his arm. The XO found himself lying on the floor, at least ten meters from where he was just ten seconds ago.

John slowly got up on his feet, his head hanging down and he wasn't in his usual strict military stance anymore, rather, in a sad stance.

The entire crew of the bridge literally took two steps away from their CO.

Slowly, John left the bridge and went towards his personal quarters to mourn the loss.

''Commander Lowell, are you alright?'' One of the bridge officers came by the Commander's side, who felt bad for his CO.

''Yeah, I am, but the Colonelâ€| he's notâ€|'' Lowell got up slowly and turned to looked at the mushroom cloud that was still on Earth, Russia.

''How much can men endure in this war? How much?'' Commander Lowell thought to himself silently, praying that the Colonel doesn't do anything stupid, like suicide.

''This is Vorshevsky, what just happened?'' The officers from the Fire of Humanity began reporting in as they could access a satellite feed from one of the orbiting satellites above Far East Russia.

''Lee here, the fuck is going on?''

''This is Andrews, we saw a massive mushroom cloud. What the fuck was that?''

''Charlie Four here, where must we deploy now?''

''All units, Commander Lowell here. Colonel John is currently decimated by the loss of hisâ€| girlfriend, so he is not capable of giving orders. While he has locked himself in his quarters, I am assuming temporary total command of this ship. Everyone must return back at once.'' Commander Lowell issued an order and sat down the Captain's chair, completely shocked at the disaster himself.

''In other news, today, in Far East Russia, just 200 kilometers North of the Kamchatka border, a thermonuclear explosion ravaged the wilds of Russia, clearing out a massive forest. The United Nations Space Command and the Office of Naval Intelligence refuse to comment, since neither have information of any on-planet nuclear tests or incidents. Witnesses say they saw a UNSC dropship dropping off two Marines into the area, possibly carrying a nuclear-grade weapon. Others claim that something fell off the sky, possibly a meteor, but regardless of the event, something happened. Stay tuned, for we will get to the bottom of this.'' A news report, two hours later after the incident, informed the entire Solar System of the incident. Public unrest ensued for an entire week, humanity demanded answers.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>About two weeks later, September 24<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2552, 1733 hours by UTC.

><strong>Colonel John was sitting on his bed, looking out of the window into the stars, with an occasional drone flying by along with an EVA Engineer. If living past the death of Voro 'Mantakree was hard enough, then the death of Jessica Mackenzie really took its toll on John, decimating him entirely. John has only eaten from the plates of food that were occasionally left outside his room on a special

table.

\_ "John, man the fuck up. You're letting everyone pity you. Is that acceptable? Is that what you were trained for?" \_A voice in John's head said with a rough and angry tone. \_"Get the fuck up and get everything back in order, maggot, GET UP AND GET OUT THERE! Yes, Jessica's dead! So? You can't really travel in time, now get the fuck out there and fucking do something!"\_ The voice in John's head, which was really John's own mind, ordered him around and John finally gathered his courage to leave the quarters. He opened the doors and the entire crew that was passing by seemingly froze, as they noticed their Colonel coming out.

"Hey guys. Chill out, I'm fine. I've got my shit together." John explained to the fellow crewmen that were right next to him and everyone seemed to let out the air from their lungs that they held while passing the quarters. They did that in hopes that Colonel Sandman won't start a sudden rampage.

"It's good to have you back, Colonel. Commander Lowell needs you back on the bridge, Sir." One of the crewmen said and John passed by, after patting him on the shoulder.

When John arrived on the bridge, the entire bridge crew was happy to see him out of his room and they eventually went to him to greet him back, not in the military style, but in the friend style, by shaking the hand or giving a hug. The females even gave him kisses to try and cheer him up even more.

"Woah, enough of thisâ€œ you guys are kind to me, but I need to visit her graveâ€œ I really do. Plus, the refits will continue for a long time." John said as he came to the bridge specifically to get the coordinates of Jessica Mackenzie's grave.

"Here, Sir." Commander Lowell pointed on the holo-map that was being projected by the holo-table. She was buried in the European Union, Latvia, just outside the city of Liepaja, which is built right on the coast of the Baltic Sea.

John, filled with emotions that wanted to get out of him, went straight towards the hangar bay to get a Pelican dropship to transport him to that cemetery.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Twenty minutes later, Liepaja Memorial Cemetery, European Union. 1800 hours by UTC. 2000 hours by UTC +2.<br>\*\*John climbed out of the D77-TC Pelican dropship and looked at the towering skyscrapers of the city that was a few kilometers away from the cemetery. The city was built beautifully, aesthetically working together with the nature around it, but that wasn't John's concern, even though he did admire the architecture of the skyscrapers that reached up as far as one kilometer into the sky.

John slowly approached the cemetery, carefully examining the gravestones and searching for Jessica's grave, when he eventually found it. She was buried right next to the entrance of the cemetery. John had brought a pair of lilies with him, the flowers that Jessica liked because they looked so beautiful. At least some sub-species of the lilies did. He put the pair right next to her gravestone as he

stood on his knees right next to it. He carefully read the text on the gravestone.

Rest In Peace

><em>Second Lieutenant<br>Jessica ''Jess'' Mackenzie  
>105<em>\_th\_\_ Shock Trooper Division, UNSC Marine Corps  
>(April 20<em>\_th\_\_, 2530 â€“ September 10<em>\_th\_\_, 2552)  
>The best Lieutenant of the Fire of Humanity.<br>Semper Fidelis

><em>

John ran his hand across the gravestone's text and began crying again with his tears falling onto Jess's grave. Soon, it began to rain, which John didn't expect, but a little bit of rain couldn't even do anything to scare him away.

''NO! Why did he have to do it? WHY? Why did I even send you there?'' John kept yelling and dropping tears as he could not cope with the fact that his closest friend died. Soon, he pulled out Jessica's dog tags that he received with a meal plate on one day. He put the dog tags directly on Jessica's grave and got up, getting himself together again. He realized that by sobbing and shouting all day long, he would not get her or anyone else back to life.

\_ ''Why didn't I at least share another night with her?'' \_ John's mind again came into play, but he quickly suppressed his thoughts about Jess to remain capable of command and prevent catching a Post-Traumatic Shock Disorder.

John gave a final salute specially for Jessica and turned around to head back for the dropship where the pilots were waiting for him.

''You okay, Sir? Can we leave?'' One of the two pilot asked, making sure that they are all set for leaving while John was climbing on the dropship.

''Let's goâ€|'' John said through his teeth, without opening his mouth entirely. He really needed something to cheer him up.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>So... Jessica Mackenzie was killed in a nuclear detonation and John is having trouble living past this event. Will he live past this event, or get discharged from the military due to emotional instability? Find out in the chapters to come.<br>R.I.P. Second Lieutenant Jessica Mackenzie.\*\*

## 10. Battle of Earth, October

\*\*Hey everyone, bringing a special chapter to you about the early Battle of Earth when Regret's Fleet attacked it. Enjoy the chapter!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>From September 24th to October 19th John was doing nothing but waiting. Waiting for the Covenant, waiting for the refits to be complete and waiting for something new. He had many sleepless nights,

but the threat of discharge from the UNSC Defense Force was gone as John got a hold of himself and stopped his suffering.<p>

During that long period of time, the UNSC Fire of Humanity was fully fitted for war, being one of the most dangerous vessels in the UNSC Navy's arsenal.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>October 20th, 2552, Earth Orbit, UNSC Fire of Humanity, Bridge. 0811 hours by UTC.<strong>

John was sitting on his chair in the bridge, looking on Earth through the frontal observation window. Looking on Earth, hundreds of UNSC warships and the three hundred Super MAC Orbital Defense Platforms also known as the ''big sticks''.

''The Covenant will have to sweat to take her, even if they come in full force.'' Commander Lowell commented as he was enjoying the sight of humanity's final defenses together with Colonel Sandman.

''I agree.'' The ship's new AI â€“ Jessica â€“ popped up, emerging in a holographic form directly above one of the multiple holo-tanks in the bridge. She emerged right next to Colonel Sandman, over a holo-tank closest to the holo-table. She had the form of a female in her early twenties, with an ODST battle dress uniform worn, except for the helmet and with long, straight hair. The only color she had was blue, like every other UNSC Artificial Intelligence and the AI herself was a ''Smart'' level AI. ''The Covenant will have real trouble beating a hole in our defenses, but even with a hole in our defenses we still have enough chances to beat them back and seal that hole.'' Jessica commented on the possibilities of defense.

The short conversation between the Commander and the AI was short-lived when one of the bridge officers shouted across the bridge about new data.

''Colonel, the AI Cortana has sent the entire fleet sensor reports of slippaces ruptures near Io.'' The officer shouted and John immediately woke up from his daydreaming.

''Bring the ship to Tactical Condition Alpha Four! I need everyone ready to respond in the case of a Covenant assault.'' John ordered and immediately stood up in his ODST battle armor. He approached the forward observation window closer, seeing his own reflection in it. Observing his own hazel colored eyes, short, dark brown hair, the facial stubble and some small scars first, then looking at Earth, noticing many ships moving away from Earth, to meet the incoming threat.

''Sir, what should we do?'' One of the two officers responsible for controlling the ship's movements asked.

''Move the ship behind platform London. Protect that platform and don't let any Covenant vessel approach it.'' John issued his order and the ship immediately accelerated with its engines flaring up in a massive blue light coming out of them, pushing the ship across space towards the Orbital Defense Platform London.

''Bring all weapons systems online, charge up the magnetic coils of

the MAC guns, load Archer missiles in their pods.'' John stoically ordered to the AI and the armaments officers in the bridge. The ship's 50mm point defense guns immediately started moving, scanning for targets, and every Archer missile pod opened up with oxygen leaving them and the tips of each missile becoming visible.

The AI Jessica immediately activated the holo-table, forcing the hologram of the table to take the form of Earth, adding three hundred little dots around it that resembled the Super MAC platforms. Jessica also added hundreds more dots, resembling the UNSC ships with Fleet Admiral Harper's fleet heading out front, moving away from one of the clusters containing the stations Cairo, Athens and Malta.

''Sir, we're positioned directly next to the London.'' The navigations officer reported as the massive Phoenix-class ship had decelerated.

''Very well.'' John acknowledged his report while still looking out the window.

''Colonel, Covenant ships have just emerged from slipspace.'' Jessica reported and slightly darkened the frontal observation window of the bridge, bringing up a scan of the Covenant fleet that contained two CAS-class Assault Carriers and thirteen CCS-class Battlecruisers.

''Contact the fighter squadrons and tell them to form a defensive perimeter around the ship.'' John told Commander Lowell what he had to do and he activated his ear-mounted communicator through which he activated the speakers in the hangar bays of the Fire of Humanity.

''All Longsword pilots, report to your fighters and prepare for an imminent fight with the Covenant. Form a defensive perimeter around the ship.'' The Commander spoke through the loudspeakers and immediately, the pilots began leaving their current positions to get to their fighters. The service crews loaded ammunition and missiles in the fighters while the pilots got ready for battle.

Immediately after the service crews finished fitting the fighters for combat, twenty GA-TL1 Longswords flew out of the Fire of Humanity's hangar bays and formed a defensive perimeter. Since the Covenant had deployed Seraph fighters to keep the entire human fleet busy, the fighters came closer to the London station, forcing Colonel John to raise the tactical condition of the battlecruiser.

''TACCON Alpha Two. Immediate contact, I see two Covenant CCS-class Battlecruisers on a direct course towards the London!''

''Sir, we've got a report that the Athens and Malta stations have been blown to dust. The Covenant have made a hole in the defenses.'' One of the communications officers reported as soon as the message went across the fleet.

''Colonel, one of the battlecruisers has fired its plasma torpedoes against us. I suggest we brace for impact.'' An armaments officer reported as he began waiting for an order for the Colonel, which followed almost immediately after the officer's accurate report.

"Brace for impact, then respond with MAC fire. Bring down its shields." John ordered as he turned around to head back to the holo-table. The window blast shields immediately began closing as the ship entered combat. Two plasma torpedoes hit the ship on multiple decks, burning the hull, but not causing any major damage.

"Damage report!" John demanded to know the situation while looking at the holo-table and zooming in on the battle between the Fire of Humanity and two CCS-class battlecruisers.

"Colonel, minor battleplate damage on decks five to twenty. Nothing serious." Jessica responded to the Colonel's order and began coordinating 50mm PDG fire against incoming Seraph fighters.

"MAC fire was effective. First battlecruiser's shield has been drained entirely." An armaments officer reported to Colonel Sandman while waiting for the MAC gun to charge up.

"Fire starboard missile salvo. Two hundred missiles." Sandman gave a firing order while slightly interested on how those two battlecruisers went past the orbital defense platforms. After the Colonel gave his order, the ship fired two hundred missiles from its starboard missile pods. The missiles violently impacted the incoming CCS-class battlecruiser, tearing open many wide holes in the armor of the vessel with one missile detonating danger close to the core.

"How'd they even get past the platforms?" John asked the question to which only Jessica knew the answer.

"Colonel, they most likely passed the platforms by going at flank speed. Also, the platforms were busy firing on the Assault Carriers, which explains how they went past easily. Also, the London is turning around to help us." Jessica explained and reported about the London as the holo-table depicted the London turning and firing its Super MAC at the damaged CCS-class battlecruiser. The shell went right through it, but not before causing extreme damage to the battlecruiser and forcing it to explode in a plasma ball. The wandering shell flew past the entire orbital defense grid and impacted a lone CCS-class Battlecruiser, but somehow the Battlecruiser managed to absorb the shell, although the cheers of the Covenant on that ship were short-lived as the immense amounts of thermodynamic energy that were released upon impact began vaporizing the entire ship, its crew and anything else it had onboard. In a few seconds there was nothing left of the Battlecruiser.

"Wellâ€¦ that went well, but we still got another one to worry about." Commander Lowell commented as John turned to look at him with a grin and then back to the holo-table.

"Crew, keep your eyes on the ship's shields engulfing the weapons. Once they go down to open a salvo of plasma torpedoes, let a rip out of the MAC cannons. That's the Covenant weakness." Colonel Sandman gave a very tricky order, because the crew needed to time it right. The shields don't keep open for minutes as they open only for two or three seconds.

"They're opening!" One of the crewmen shouted and another, responsible for the MAC firing, immediately punched in the firing solution.

''MAC fired.'' The MAC officer replied with a yell across the bridge, signaling that the MAC shell is in flight. Less than a second after it was fired, it hit the ship and exploded near the Covenant Battlecruiser's plasma torpedo launchers, completely burning the frontal part of the vessel, opening many holes.

''Great shot. Now, fire four MAC shells in succession to destroy that ship entirely. Don't fire both guns at the same time as that would be bad.'' Sandman gave another order so that the CCS-class would get completely destroyed by the MACs.

''MAC One fired.'' An officer reported with audible enthusiasm. While the second MAC was still charging up, the London fired a Super MAC shell. The brutal force from the orbital defense platform literally ripped the Covenant Battlecruiser in two pieces which exploded later on.

''Sir, I have detected multiple life pods, drop pods and dropships heading for the surface of Earth. About a thousand or more Covenant footsoldiers are going to land on Earth.'' Jessica reported of a developing situation, stoically. John stood up from his chair and Jessica forced the holo-table to show the Covenant approaching Earth.

''Fire missiles at them, try to intercept them.'' John ordered but it was already too late as the Covenant were already landing.

''Sir, first units have already landed on Earth.'' Jessica reported, rendering John's order outdated.

''Where?'' John wanted to know as he primed his M6C pistol.

''North and North Eastern Europe, Colonel.'' Jessica responded and immediately after hearing the word ''Europe'', John went towards the exit. He was getting ready for ground combat. A bloody ground fight against the Covenant.

''Lowell, I'm leaving you in charge of the ship. I'll meet the Covies on the ground.'' Sandman ordered with visible anger on his face, before he put on his ODST helmet and polarized its visor.

''Sir, I will keep the ship and her crew safe.'' Lowell acknowledged this new responsibility and he knew that it wasn't an easy job to command a Phoenix-class Battlecruiser. One wrong order could destroy the entire vessel.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Fire of Humanity's Pod Bay 02, 0903 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*''Helljumpers, get ready to drop down to Earth and kick the Covenant asses back into space.'' Colonel Sandman entered the pod bay with an order that went across pod bays one to three. The ODSTs immediately grabbed their gear and loaded into their drop pods, awaiting their drop.

John grabbed a BR55 battle rifle with him, as well as an M90 Close Assault Weapons System, in short, a shotgun.

''The sound of someone racking up the pump of the M90 is universally

recognized as ''kiss your ass goodbye''. Hehe.'' John commented on his choice of the M90 CAWS, as it truly was a weapon that brings instant death in close quarter combat situations. He went to his drop pod, where he put his gear in its respective holsters inside the pod and he went inside it himself. As soon as he got in the pod, the pod bay sealed shut and every pod closed its hatch. The hatches below every pod opened as the UNSC Fire of Humanity flew directly over Northern Europe.

The pods flew out almost all at once when the green light was given, falling in a steep angle down to Stockholm, where most of the Covenant had landed. The pods suddenly activated air brakes to prevent the death of the occupants. Death from falling.

The air brakes didn't work for long as the pods renewed their acceleration downwards, although they crashed on the ground immediately after. Some pods landed on the towering skyscrapers of the metropolis, causing some difficulty for the ODSTs to find their units, but most of the pods landed on the streets, directly between the civilians and their vehicles.

''Gah, my hatch is stuck.'' John was angered as he could not open his hatch in a normal way, so he had to use the manual charges set on three locations. He pressed each red button and the pod's hatch blew open, flying into a nearby wall. John grabbed his gear and immediately left his pod, arming himself with the battle rifle. He noticed that the civilians were in a hurry to hide in their homes or in a hurry to run away from the Covenant. Using his HUD, he zoomed in to an area three hundred meters away from his drop pod, across many streets. There he saw many Grunts shooting down civilians that were trying to get to safety, as well as a few Elites, Minors and Majors, along with Jackals.

''All units, report.'' John demanded a situation report while he was rushing towards the bunch of Grunts, Jackals and Elites. He quickly swapped his battle rifle for the M90 shotgun, attaching the battle rifle on his back. He pumped the shotgun and got ready to fire, as his right hand's index finger was already placed on the trigger.

''This is Fourth Platoon, Eighty Ninth Shock Company. We've landed safely and are heading towards the UNSC representative house in the city which is located next to the old palace.'' A Platoon Leader of the 4th Platoon informed of their situation.

''First Platoon, we've engaged dozens of Covenant footsoldiers ranging from small Grunts and Jackals to Elites! Nothing we can't handle.''

''Second Platoon, we're going to rendezvous with you at the next crossroads, Colonel. Be ready.''

''Third Platoon here, we're following Second Platoon.''

''This is the Fifth Shock Company, we have landed outside of the designated city and are engaged with the Covenant. Taking minor casualties, so don't expect us to help you out anytime soon.

''Thirty Ninth Shock Company here. We have landed with minor

casualties atâ€| uhâ€| let me see on the mapâ€| '' One of the Company Leaders, a Captain of the ODSTs, was trying to find his location on a map and what he found was that he landed a few hundred kilometers to the East. ''Shitâ€| uh Colonel, we landed in Courland, Latvia, but there are hundreds of Covenant footsoldiers here. I assume they're heading towards the largest population center of the nation-state. We're contacting the ship to give us a lift there, to beat the Covenant before they get there.'' The Captain finalized his report.

''That's it. All Shock Companies reported in.'' Jessica informed the Colonel that all three Shock Companies have checked in.

John immediately ran behind a skyscraper and checked around it to see the Covenant. He counted at least forty Grunts, twelve Jackals and five Elites guarding a chokepoint. He quickly turned around when he heard loud footsteps made from two ODST platoons. John made a gesture towards everyone that the Covenant are behind the skyscraper.

''How many are we up against?'' Lieutenant Scarecrow asked as he was the one closest to the Colonel.

''Sixty seven Covenant footsoldiers. Some have fuel rod guns.'' John gave the information to the Platoon Leader â€" Lieutenant Scarecrow.

''How do we take them, Sir?'' Scarecrow asked curiously.

''Get the machine gunners and snipers inside this building through those emergency doors. Set them up in the windows that have the best overlook on the Covenant and tell them to wait for my go.'' John explained his idea of clearing the Covenant by surprise.

''Alright, I assume each one of you heard the plan?'' Scarecrow checked if everyone heard their superior's plan. Every ODST with a machine gun or a sniper rifle nodded. There were only ten men with machine guns and sniper rifles. Ten out of eighty, total.

''How do WE go in, Colonel?'' Scarecrow said, while dusting his helmet a bit.

''Feet first.'' Colonel John Sandman answered and turned around the corner while priming his shotgun for a nice murder fest. Two platoons of angry human Helljumpers immediately followed him, their head slightly tilted downwards to indicate that they are outraged by the fact that the Covenant are on Earth. The Grunts were immediately scared beyond any limits as there was seventy one human, clad in black ceramic-titanium armor, some having customized drawings or patches on their armor. The one who stood out the most was their leader. He had a red dragon drawn on his armor's chest plate, along with its wings seemingly ''grabbing'' his arms.

The leader came into range and fired his shotgun, murdering an Elite Major with two energy swords. The Elite, after being shot by 15 pellets, flew back three meters and fell on the ground.

''Leader dead! Run!'' One of the Grunts exclaimed and a bunch of minor Grunts ran away from the choke point.

''Humans angry! Me scared.'' Another Grunt quietly whispered to

himself until an Elite grabbed it and threw it at the humans. The human leader "Colonel Sandman" blew the flying Grunt away by shooting 15 pellets of the 8 gauge shotgun into it. A one-shot kill. The Grunt was blown back as it landed next to the dead Elite Major.

"Helljumpers, open fire!" Colonel Sandman shouted across the communications channel, so that everyone might hear his order. The ODSTs in the skyscraper opened fire from sniper rifles and machine guns, mowing down a lot of the Covenant, while the two platoons of ODSTs along with the Colonel fired from their weapons ranging from M7S/Caseless sub-machine guns and BR55 battle rifles to MA5B assault rifles, M90 shotguns and MA37 assault rifles.

The automatic gunfire of about seventy humans was enough to gun down more than half of the Covenant in the area.

"Ragh! Human scum!" An Elite cursed while being behind cover. He realized that if he were to peek behind his cover, seventy humans would fire, or one human would fire a sniper rifle and blow his head off and that while he was behind the human civilian car, he was in safety. He was safe, until eight frag grenades landed right next to him and exploded, ripping the Elite into shreds.

"Oh yeah, something smells like Covenant barbecue here." One of the ODSTs commented as it truly did smell like burnt meat.

"Hmâ€œ I expected more Covenant to be here." John was thinking on the COM channel, when Jessica suddenly chimed in.

"It seems that I was mistaken. Most of the Covenant landed in the Baltics and the Army garrison there is currently getting overrun by their sheer numbers." Jessica admitted that she was wrong and that the Helljumpers were dropped in the wrong area, but still, they did save a city where at least ten million humans resided. "Colonel, I am sending a wave of Pelicans to your position. Please wait for them to arrive, then you will be taken to Riga, where the fighting's the fiercest."

"Alright. You heard the lady, wait for the dropships, then we get to the real fighting." John announced to both platoons that were with him.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Twenty minutes later, Riga, 1039 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*\*I can't drop you any further, Helljumpers. This is as close to the fighting as you can get." The pilot of the Pelican announced and flew two kilometers over a beach, directly north of the main fighting, above the Western bank of the Daugava river.

"That's alright. Thanks for the lift." John thanked the pilot and as soon as the troop bay doors of the Pelican opened, he was the first one to jump out and dive directly down.

"I hope your chutes still work, Helljumpers, for we are now diving into real danger." John tried to irritate his Marines as they were jumping out of the Pelican dropships. The entire 89th Shock Company had gathered together for a drop down to the city.

"Oorah! This is what I signed up for!" One of the ODSTs exclaimed as he really expected to see jumps like these.

"Open your chutes only on my command." John announced over the COM channel as he was watching the altitude meter on his HUD. As soon as the company fell below the four hundred meter mark, he ordered for everyone to open their parachutes.

"Open up and steer to the Eastern bank of the river."

"Hell yeah!" The same ODST that exclaimed before, shouted again.

As soon as the company had landed on The 11th November embankment that was running along the river, they immediately organized a defensive perimeter around the old Castle of Riga in which the entire struggle was coming from. Whoever held the castle of the city, held the entire nation-state of Latvia.

"Aw hell. Hunters. I didn't fucking grab my anti-tank weapons." An Army Trooper of the garrison shouted as soon as he noticed a pair of Hunters approach the castle.

"Move over. I got this." An ODST Sniper said as soon as he came to the Trooper's position. He set up his sniper rifle and aimed at the Hunter weak spots - their heads.

After an hour of bloody fighting, the Covenant had been pushed back across the river, but before they left the city center, they up two of the bridges that they crossed. There were three more bridges left of which one was a Mag-Lev train bridge which was the ODST only option to secure a beachhead on the Western bank. It was their only option, because they can cross it without being detected, mainly, they can use the large pipes that run under it to stealthily cross the bridge.

When the 89th Shock Company crossed the bridge, they emerged from beneath it in a mighty display of fire, firing their guns and throwing grenades everywhere to thin out the Covenant ranks. The Covenant force posted at the bridge was relatively small - twenty Grunts, one jackal and two Elites. That force was easily taken out by the ODST Company. When the 89th took out the defenders, they ran towards the Misriah Armories tower that was only 300 meters west of the bridge that they crossed. John took 1st Platoon along with Lieutenant Scarecrow and entered the tower to see if there are any Covenant stragglers in there. It didn't take long for the forty man platoon to clear out every room in the tower and return to ground level.

"Strange. There weren't many Covenant in the tower, yet there was a ridiculously high amount of Army Trooper bodies littering the tower." John commented on what he saw while he cleared out a few floors.

"I had the same. I counted at least twenty Army Trooper bodies." Scarecrow commented as he found that to be strangest thing he had seen in the last three months.

"Captain, report. What's the situation on the outside?" Sandman tried contacting the rest of the company on the outside, but one of

the ODSTs pointed at a body near the entrance. It seemed to be cut in half as the torso was detaching from the legs.

"Holy shit!" John said as his hand slowly moved away from the communicator. He pointed for the Platoon to head outside, and the men obeyed. Everyone rushed outside and noticed a pool of human blood, and a lot of dead bodies. Humans cut in half, their limbs cut off or simply their heads missing, or lying somewhere far off.

"Dear God! What happened here?" An ODST asked in pure shock and awe of the sight. Another ODST approached the dead body of his friend, which was missing a left arm, half of the right arm and the left leg.

"Anton! I thought you'd introduce me to your family once!" The ODST cried as his best friend was among the dead.

"I heard something." John said as he heard someone stepping. This increased the pressure on the ODSTs as whoever had killed one hundred and twenty ODSTs was still here. John could see something moving, but could not tell what it was. He was sure that was a camouflaged Elite.

"We've got a camo Elite." John informed the platoon and their readiness increased.

"Roger, camouflaged Elite." Scarecrow confirmed John's sightings as he saw it for a short second as well. Suddenly, the Elite lunged at a bunch of ODSTs and slayed them all with two swings of its energy swords. Six ODSTs were killed and then three plasma grenades were stuck to three different ODSTs that were in bunches. The resulting explosions killed seven more and wounded the rest, excluding Lieutenant Scarecrow and Colonel Sandman.

"Did you see that? He practically disabled the entire platoon in two moves." Lieutenant Scarecrow was in deep fear.

"I saw that. He's good, he is really good." John said while secretly he was looking at every footstep of the camouflaged Elite as apparently, its camo system was badly damaged, because John was able to see it with a naked eye. The Elite lunged at the two ODSTs and knocked them both off their feet, but not before John managed to stick a frag grenade to its armor using an old trick. He had a frag grenade with sticky tape and used that tape to attach the grenade to the Elite's armor while it knocked him off his feet.

The resulting explosion knocked the Elite's shields and camouflage offline.

"How'd you do that, Sir?" Scarecrow asked as he was amazed at his Colonel's quick reaction and amazing grenade-sticking skills.

"Duct tape." John commented as he took aim on the Elite, but not before observing its armor. It was entirely dark, like an ODSTs battle dress uniform, and it had more areas covered than even a Spec Ops Elite. The face was fully sealed and had two visors for the eyes. This Elite had a straighter figure, but curvier and was shorter than the other Elites, making John think that he's dealing with a female.

Scarecrow and John, after observing the Elite, aimed down their sights at the wounded Elite and opened fire, but the Elite blocked their bullets by activating its two energy shields and using them to cover itself.

''Shit! It's pointless!'' Scarecrow panicked and the Elite lashed out at him with its energy swords cutting off his right arm.

''GAH! AHHHH! My arm! My fucking arm!'' Scarecrow freaked out from the pain and from seeing his own arm of the ground, bleeding out. He fell down on the ground, leaving John and the Elite on a one-on-one against each other. The Elite attacked John from behind, but John could hear it as its foot clinked against the armor of a downed ODST. He bashed an energy sword out of the Elite's hand, after his own battle rifle was cut in half while he was using it as a shield. Now, the two were on an even setting.

''It's you versus me, fucker. Time you paid for your crimes against an innocent race.'' John taunted the Elite that made the Elite slow down for a while as it was processing its own thoughts. John lunged at the Elite while it was preoccupied and managed to cut its helmet's side, revealing a portion of the face. Seeing that this Elite had smaller mandibles and more opportunities for more facial expressions, he was convinced it was a female Sangheili, but regardless of gender, John was determined to take it out mercilessly. John waved his energy sword at the Elite in attempt to perform an overhead slash, but he failed as the Elite blocked his strike and kicked him into a nearby wall.

The Elite came closer to the ODST and wanted to end this quickly as it lined up its sword for a stab, but while attempting to stick the sword into John's abdomen, John had rolled away and attempted to stab the Elite in the side. He was blocked when the Elite intercepted his hand and turned it around, trying to break it, but John seemed to be stronger as he used his free hand to pull out a combat knife and stab the Elite's hand. He stabbed the hand and when the Elite removed its hand from him, he quickly remove the knife from its hand with a purple blood trail following it.

>John put the knife in its holster and pulled out his M6C instead, pointing the barrel upward and placing it in front of his visor, while the energy sword, which was in his right hand, was kept pointing downwards. He was waiting for the next step of the Sangheili female.<p>

The Sangheili dropped her energy swords on the ground and raised her fists in the air. After a while of waiting, she assaulted John and kicked his weapons out of his hands and picked up the M6C. She pointed it at him and pulled the trigger, only hearing the click sound.

John showed a M6C mag in his hands and threw it far away, so that the Elite doesn't run after it. The Sangheili decided to drop the human weapon and assault the human Colonel with fists only. John was the first to attack this time as he tried to make a punch, but the Elite easily deflected it by slightly pushing his arm out of the punch trajectory. While the Elite deflected John's punch, the human made another punch to the stomach and managed to punch through even through all that armor. John then made a kick to push the Elite slightly away, but the kick was stopped as the Elite kicked back and forced John on the ground. The Elite then leaned over John and forced

his helmet off, staring him directly into the eyes.

Apparently, the Sangheili female was panting straight into John's face and she didn't look very happy. She was about to deal a finishing blow to Colonel Sandman with an energy dagger, when a Pelican made a strafing run directly over it penetrating its armor and wounding it. The Sangheili gave her final glance to her enemy and ran off somewhere, while the Pelican landed and dropped a squad of UNSC Marines from the 58th Armored Regiment, 756th Platoon.

"Captain Andrews, Major Vorshevsky, the Colonel is secure and alive, but we've got one hundred and sixty casualties." A Sergeant informed the ones who had sent him on a rescue operation.

"Affirmative. Load the Colonel in the Pelican and get back up to the ship. We will send Pelicans to gather the dead and wounded." Major Vorshevsky gave the order that the Sergeant simply had to execute. The Sergeant and his squad loaded the Colonel in the Pelican and they immediately took off for the Fire of Humanity to place him in the medical bay.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Three hours later, UNSC Fire of Humanity's medical bay. 1638 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*John had woke up only three hours after he was saved by a squad of Marines. He noticed that Commander Lowell was sitting right next to him, waiting to give him a report.

"Lowell, what's new?" John asked to make the Commander aware that he is awake.

"Sir, a Covenant Assault Carrier had landed in New Mombasa, Kenya and executed an in-atmosphere slippage jump about an hour or so later. That was the last ship of the FIRST group of Covenant ships that attacked Earth. The second group, Sir, was a larger group and forced the UNSC to dig in as it attacked every major population center on Earth. European Union, Russia, URNA, everywhere. The Navy is currently engaging it with everything it's got, so it'll be a tough fight, but I am pretty sure we'll win it." The Commander gave his report while he was frowning from anger.

"Alrightâ€| that's really badâ€| like that Elite that single-handedly murdered an entire company of heroes using energy swords and camouflage." John commented and that comment caught the Commander's attention as he wanted to learn more. Of course, John told him of the story and every detail of it involving simple punches and deflects and especially the deep stare of the Elite that John will never forget.

After telling the story of his encounter with his match, John closed his eyes and went for a rest as he stretched his arms to the sides and quickly fell asleep. Commander Lowell realized that he had to give the Colonel his privacy and left the room of the medical bay that John was in and went straight for the bridge.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Colonel John Sandman had met his match and had almost been killed, if not for the timely arrival of a Pelican dropship that

forced the Sangheili female to run away from him. Find out what happens between John and this new match when the Elites form an alliance with the UNSC to defeat the Covenant once and for all.<strong>

## 11. Battle of Earth, November

\*\*Hey people. Bringing yet another chapter for your eyes, so, dive in and enjoy.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>After less than a month of bloodshed on Earth and its orbit, both sides began gradually suffering from attrition, the Covenant suffering more from it, because the UNSC, in early November, had secured a key victory on Mars and around it, ensuring the production of vital supplies like weapons and ammunition for the weapons, as well as rations for the human homeworld. While Mars was secured, the Covenant gained a lot of ground on Earth, gradually occupying more than fifty percent of the planet. The UNSC managed to halt the Covenant from gaining any ground. Pockets of Marines and Army Infantrymen were surrounded by Covenant across different areas in Europe and Asia, while a bloody fight for Africa was still ongoing.<p>

In the middle of November, a Covenant Separatist force of a few dozen warships dropped out of slipspace and offered the UNSC's battered Home Fleet help, which the humans accepted, gradually increasing the chances of the humans to repel the Covenant Empire from Earth and take the fight to them.

Colonel John Sandman was coordinating his two regiments' fighting from his ship, the Fire of Humanity while leading the warship in battle above Earth at the same time. Ever since the First Battle of Riga, he has not encountered the Sangheili female that defeated him in a one-on-one battle. He has heard only rumors go around the entire planet.

But, it seems that fate and an unexpected event will bring the two enemies together.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Earth's orbit, November 16<strong>\*\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 1433 hours by UTC. Bridge of the Fire of Humanity.

><strong>Colonel John Sandman was sitting on his chair, almost sleepy because he hasn't slept well in the last few days.

><strong><br>\*\*\*'Colonel, the UNSC frigate ''Charon'' is approaching us for refueling and rearming. They want to know if they're clear for docking.'' The ship's AI â€“ Jessica â€“ informed the Colonel of a new situation.

''I guess some things never change for a ship this size. Allocate them some fuel reserves and a part of our ammunition.'' Colonel Sandman replied and gave a new order with a smile, knowing that there's one role that can't be removed from a Phoenix-class Battlecruiser â€“ Rearming and refueling the ships of a fleet that it is part of.

''Sir, I received a report that a Sangheili Corvette has just been destroyed. Their life pods are heading our way and they need a ship to be accepted in.'' One of the Communications officers of the bridge informed his CO with a strong Scottish accent.

''Ahâ€| send Pelicans for a search and rescue op. Get them aboard the ship.'' Colonel Sandman commanded the Comms officer to send a few Pelicans out.

''Aye, Sir.'' The officer acknowledged the order and sent out a few Pelicans to get the life pods onboard the ship.

''The Charon has docked. We're attaching a fuel hose now and the ammunition boxes are being loaded inside of it.'' Jessica informed the Colonel of the progress on the Charon.

''Rightâ€|'' John acknowledged, though largely bored that his ship had to stay out of the action for a day, to resupply some other ships. He then turned towards the holo-table to watch over the 57th Shock Trooper Regiment's progress in securing the city of Riga in what is known as the Second Battle of Riga. He noticed the battle was over and a UNSC emblem, as a hologram, popped over the city, indicating that the city and its surrounding area were secured and the Covenant was beaten back.

''Captains Lee and Andrews, well done in Riga. I want your men to dig-in and wait for reinforcements to arrive, if I can get Lord Hood to divert a few divisions to Europe.'' Colonel Sandman gave a promise to reinforce the Baltic Front.

''Affirmative, Sir. No Covenant will get past our defenses. Big or small, all will fall.'' Captain Lee acknowledged the Colonel's promise. John then quickly moved the hologram over Sweden, where the 58th Armored Regiment was fighting a bloody battle against a three times larger Covenant Loyalist force on a Mag-Lev train route from Stockholm to JÃ¶nkÃ¶ping. They had to secure the city of JÃ¶nkÃ¶ping for vital supplies to head out to surrounding areas and further, like Norway, Denmark, Germany and Central Sweden.

John noticed that a single company broke away from the battle and rushed off North, running through the deep snow with visible trouble. After prowling through the snow and breaking far enough off from the battle, the company turned West, heading towards the lake which was frozen solid, because, apparently, winter came earlier than expected.

The company was apparently using the lake to flank the Covenant as they were heading South straight when they stepped on the lake. The target was JÃ¶nkÃ¶ping, as they had to fortify inside the city and attack the Covenant from behind.

''Hmâ€| Vorshevsky, that's a tricky plan.'' John commented on the Major's tactical skills after watching the flanking maneuver. When the Marines entered the city, they immediately unleashed a fire of lead upon the Covenant force from behind, destroying many heavy vehicles with rockets and gunning down dozens of Covenant footsoldiers with automatic rifle fire.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Meanwhile, Hangar Bay 06, UNSC Fire of Humanity.<br>\*\*Two Pelicans arrived in Hangar Bay 06 and dropped off two life pods containing five Elites each. In one of the pods was the Sangheili who John had encountered less than a month ago, but this time, instead of being an enemy, she came as an ally.

When the pods opened, UNSC Marines approached the pod to help out any wounded, if there were any. Turns out, there were no wounded personnel and some Marines directed them towards the highest ranking officers with their escorts.

While walking down the many hallways, the Elites noticed how busy each crewmember was on this ship, running from one end to another, checking if everything is alright. There even was a sealed deck, due to plasma burns on it and EVA engineers were trying to repair the deck to get crewmembers back in there.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Bridge, 1512 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*The Elite Ultra that was in charge of the destroyed Corvette arrived with two escorts. One of those two was a Sangheili female in the dark armor, full body armor.

''Human Shipmaster, where are you?'' The Elite Ultra demanded to see the one who accepted to save him and his crew.

''I'm John Sandman. \_Colonel \_John Sandman. Commanding Officer of the UNSC Phoenix-class Battlecruiser, Fire of Humanity.'' John Sandman introduced himself as he turned around and left his observation window, heading closer for the Elite Ultra. The Ultra kneeled before his savior.

''You don't need to kneel before me.'' John said while putting his hand on the Ultra's shoulder. His eyes suddenly moved towards the black armored Sangheili female and noticed that she was looking at him as well. He could see it, because she was using a standard Sangheili combat helmet. When their two eyes met, fury overtook them both and the Sangheili lunged at John, knocking him down on the titanium floor of the bridge. The bridge's crew and the other Elites were shocked at this rivalry.

The Sangheili female was about to begin crushing John's neck, when John kicked her off and jumped on his feet, but he lost his balance again when she kicked him down to the floor again, but John managed to pull out his combat knife to put it against her neck.

The female shot out an energy dagger out of her left hand and lined it up for a stab at the same time as John was lining up his right arm for a stab into her hand. Before the two could murder each other, the entire bridge crew rushed to pull the Sangheili female off from John and they secured her arms so that she doesn't stab anyone. The two Sangheili officers had to help as well. The crew also had to secure John's hand so that he doesn't stab the Sangheili female.

''Both of you need to chill off!'' Commander Lowell shouted in anger, seeing as how the two still had the wish to kill each other.

''Maybe it's a better idea to let them fight to the bitter end?'' The

Sangheili Ultra suggested to Commander Lowell, Colonel Sandman's XO, while the Commander and Ultra were observing the human Colonel and the Sangheili female struggle to free themselves from human hands.

"'No. We'll do a bit of a more humane way here. Let's put them in one room and lock them in until they resolve their conflict.'" Commander Lowell suggested an interesting possibility.

"'Hmâ€| very interesting. Is there such a room on this ship that you can lock them in? If we are to be allies, we would want to end all petty squabbling between our two races.'" The Sangheili Ultra seemed to completely agree with Commander Lowell's suggestion and even wanted to know if a room for "ending conflicts" exists aboard the ship.

"'Well, we can always lock them in the Colonel's private cabin on this same deck.'" Lowell suggested the most reasonable option at the time, because the ship had no conflict rooms.

"'Let's do it.'" The Sangheili Ultra agreed entirely and made an attempt of a grin on his face with his four mandibles.

The Ultra made a gesture of his hand and an Elite Major restrained the female, at the same time removing her weapons, and Commander Lowell, along with a Bridge Guards Lieutenant Commander restrained Colonel Sandman, while removing his weapons as well, and directed him towards his own cabin along with the female. The two got placed in it and the cabin was sealed from the outer side. The female immediately crawled into a nearby corner, tugging herself together while John slowly went towards the window at the far end of the cabin. Next to his window was a small table on which multiple holo-stills stood. The Sangheili female, watching from her corner, saw John caressing the holo-still of a young woman in black armor, smiling.

John quickly turned around only to notice the female staring at that picture, but immediately after he turned around, her eyes turned elsewhere, away from him.

Realizing that she is planning on talking with him, he decided to take the initiative and start a dialogue.

"'Hey. What's your name?'" John asked to try and ease the tension between him and her. The Sangheili female refused to talk as she tried turning her head away, inclining that she isn't interested, but John knew that she wanted to talk with him.

"'I realize you're not one of the most talkative Sangheili, but lookâ€|'" John sighed as he was thinking of something to say, while approaching the Sangheili female. He kneeled down closer and noticed the Sangheili tug closer to herself. "'â€|I don't want to hurt you. We're allies now ever since the Arbiter and Sergeant Major Johnson sealed an alliance on Delta Halo.'" When John said that he didn't want to hurt her, she could feel better, considering that she murdered his entire Company of elite Marines.

"'Lookâ€| how about we introduce each other? My name is John Sandman, I am a twenty-two year old human born over Harvest during the five year Harvest Campaign.'" John introduced himself and awaited for the Sangheili to introduce herself.

"'M-my name isâ€| Rala 'Thenam. I am twenty one years old and I was born on Sanghelios, in the city state of 'Vadam.' ' The Sangheili female shyly introduced herself to the human in front of her, who was trying to look directly into her eyes.

"'Goodâ€| I think we're making progress.' ' John felt relieved to see progress develop between him and Rala. Though he still seemed surprised when she gave him a question.

"'Whoâ€| who was that human in the picture?' ' Rala asked about the holo-still containing John's deceased girlfriend.

"'That isâ€| wasâ€| Lieutenant Jessica Mackenzie. Sheâ€| ' ' John sighed as he had a tough time even going back to that part of his memories. "'â€|she was a close of friend of mine. We lived through a lot, but thenâ€| she died by a nuclear incidentâ€| ' ' John hung his head in sadness, but then quickly got a hold of his own emotions.

"'I'mâ€| sorry.' ' Rala could feel the emotional damage that was dealt to her new human friend.

"'Yeah.' ' John said as he went back to the holo-stills near the window. Rala could see the face of an Elite posing with John.

"'Who's that Sangheili in that picture with you?' ' Rala was most curious and asked another question.

John quickly understood what she meant and took the holo-still with him, bringing it to Rala 'Thenam. He gave the holo-still to Rala so that she can examine it.

"'That Sangheili Major was Voro 'Mantakree. I nicknamed him ''Major'' because he did not reveal his name to me and I named him that because of his rank. He died protecting a human Field Army from total annihilation. He detonated a thermonuclear device on the planet Reach.' ' Another emotional subject was accidentally brought up, because Rala had no idea that Voro and the human, Jessica, were so dear to him and both were dead.

"'I was on your Reach and I saw that nuclear detonation from a distance. Back then I was not as skillful as I was when Iâ€| Iâ€| sorry, I don't want to say it.' ' Rala was ashamed to mention anything about her brutal murder of more than one hundred and forty humans. She gave the holo-still back to its rightful owner. John put the holo-still away in his pocket and offered Rala a hand to get up.

"'Stop sitting in that corner.' ' John said while offering his hand to her. She accepted, although still ashamed. The two then sat on John's bed to discuss a few things.

"'Look, I can't forgive you for the murder of my menâ€| that wasn't a good deed, especially the way you murdered themâ€| but maybe in timeâ€| Iâ€| ' ' John said and then quickly turned his head to notice a plasma torpedo heading straight towards for his window. There was no time to inform Rala to take cover so he dived straight at her so that the both of them can land behind John's bed while the torpedo

impacted the window and burned the surrounding battleplate. The window was blown open and the atmosphere was being vented and John had to close it manually. Luckily, he had his battle dress uniform on, along with the mag-boots. He used his mag-boots to reach the console near the doors responsible for emergency blast shield in case of penetration.

John bashed the button of the console and the emergency blast shield closed, sealing the room and preventing the oxygen to leave the cabin. The cabin's doors seemed to unlock, allowing Rala and John to exit the cabin.

''Rala, come on, let's get back to the bridge!'' John ordered Rala, but she didn't growl back against his order, a sign that she actually had nothing against him. She agreed to follow him immediately as the two made their way towards the bridge.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Fire of Humanity, Bridge, 1710 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*'' Incoming Covenant Loyalist Destroyer. I estimate that at current velocity and trajectory, they are going to ram us head-on.'' The AI Jessica informed Commander Lowell, who had to take immediate action, but he was too late when Rala and John entered the bridge.

''Navigations, take a hard starboard before both of the ships are turned to smashed pancakes of metal!'' John issued the order to the navigations officers.

''Roger that.'' The officers acknowledged the order and the maneuver immediately began, moving the ship out of the Destroyer's trajectory.

''Open fire from all portside weapons systems as soon as the Destroyer is lined up with that side.'' John issued a firing solution for all officers responding for the portside weapons systems and Jessica who responsible for the point-defense guns of the ship. The portside oversized Archer missile pods opened up and the missiles themselves moved slightly out, ready to be fired. The missile turrets emerged from the hull and lined up with the Destroyer, taking an aim on every possible weak spot.

''Shall we fire, Sir? The Destroyer is lined up.'' One of the gunnery officers informed the Colonel and waited for an order. The rest of the gunnery officers did the same â€“ wait. The order didn't come long after.

''Fire a full barrage!'' John ordered and every missile, every 50mm shell flew direct at the Destroyer, bombarding its shields with massive damage until they were lowered, paving the way for the missiles to breach the hull and destroy the Covenant Destroyer, though the Destroyer didn't move by idly. It was firing its plasma torpedoes at the battlecruiser as well, causing significant damage to many decks and opening holes in some of them.

''Status of the Charon?'' Commander Lowell wished to know of the situation with the UNSC Charon.

''The Charon is alrightâ€| waitâ€| new data. The Charon is disabled

forever. It took a direct hit to its engines, MAC gun and the bridge, and is incapable of further fighting. It's still attached to us.'' The AI Jessica responded, correcting old data with new data.

''The Destroyer is trying to flee.'' Jessica informed after she calculated the new trajectory of the Destroyer. ''If we hurry and turn around, we can line up a MAC shot with its engines.'' She informed and the crew was waiting for John's signal.

''Execute.'' He gave the signal for what the crew wanted to do â€“ destroy a Covenant Destroyer. The UNSC Fire of Humanity's main thrusters lit up in blue flames and pushed the ship forward while maneuvering thrusters were turning it around to line up its Magnetic Accelerator Cannons with the fleeing Destroyer.

''MAC One ready. We're firing in threeâ€| twoâ€| oneâ€| MAC shell away andâ€| direct hit! Direct hit with the Destroyer's engines!'' One out of two MAC Gunnery Officers exclaimed in joy as the MAC shell he fired, with the AI's assistance, made direct impact with the Destroyer's engines.

''Fire another MAC shell and destroy the Destroyer entirely.'' John ordered and then went back to his chair that was never even occupied by Commander Lowell or one of the Elites. Rala followed her new friend, ignoring the gazes of her fellow Sangheili.

''Jessica, I assume you've sent some help to the Baltic Front?'' John asked if his promise was kept by Jessica.

''Yes, Colonel. Fleet Admiral Lord Terrence Hood has moved two Army Regions from Mars to Earth, the Baltic Front and established the Baltic Theater of Operations. In total, there should be five million Army Troopers in Europe now, four million more than two hours ago. Our ship has just opened up the route for those Army Regions to enter Earth.'' Jessica reported as she had held John's promise for his regiment to convince Lord Hood about moving a few Armies to Earth.

''Excellent. Now we can free up some of the encircled units and strengthen some of our men down on Earth.'' John was impressed at the sheer size of the Armies that Lord Hood diverted. As the de facto leader of the UNSC, he could've categorically rejected even, but he must've felt that Europe is too important for him and was slowly being lost.

''Major Vorshevsky, how's the situation at JÃ¶nkÃ¶ping?'' Colonel Sandman contacted his trusty Major and asked for a situation report, impatiently as he wanted for those vital supplies to reach other areas in Europe.

''Colonel, JÃ¶nkÃ¶ping is ours again! The UNSC banner flies over the city hall once more and vital supplies are sent all over Northern Europe, including Denmark and Germany!'' The Major joyfully responded.

''Well done, Vorshevsky, but now I want you to group up with the 57th Shock Trooper Regiment South of Berlin and push all the way down to Florence once your men are rested.'' Sandman issued a new order for the Major, but he forgot to mention one thing and asked it later.

"'Vorshevsky, send me your best men. I need at least one hundred and twenty of them.'" The Colonel wanted to create a new elite Shock Trooper Company out of the ashes of the 89th Shock Trooper Company.

"'Alright, Comrade Colonel, you'll get your men.'" Major Vorshevsky said and immediately began gathering an entire company of elite Marines that John wants to induct into the 105th Division as a new, personal ODST company.

"'Some things never change, Colonel.'" Commander Lowell commented, smiling and realizing that the Colonel would never abandon the battlefield to sit in the safety of orbit.

"'Nope, they don't.''"

"'What never changes?'" Rala silently asked herself about what the two humans were talking about.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Twenty minutes later.<br>\*\*The final Pelican with the possible ODSTs arrived at Hangar Bay 03, where the ODSTs were offloaded. John had went down a few decks to meet them all, along with Rala waiting outside the hangar, who was ordered by the Elite Ultra to stay on the human ship as the Elites left the Fire of Humanity for another ship.

"'Welcome back, candidates. I assume all of you know why you've been called back?'" Colonel Sandman welcomed his new ODST company, but named all of them candidates as some might drop out.

"'Sir, to become real Helljumpers, Sir!'" The Marines answered in a unison.

"'Very wellâ€¦ welcome to the 89th Shock Company. You've passed selection!'" Colonel Sandman formed the 89th Shock Trooper Company right away as he didn't want them to pass any fake test. The best test is combat and it proved that these Marines were meant for service as Marine Corps Special Forces. Suddenly, Rala appeared in the hangar bay.

"'Sir, shouldn't we have any tests or something?'" One of the Marines asked. That same Marine, after asking and noticing the Sangheili, felt a bit scared.

"'The best test is combat, fellow Helljumper. Youâ€¦ all of you have proved worthy of wearing the ODST battle armor while fighting for the Swedish city of JÃ¶nkÃ¶ping.'" John explained why he didn't create any tests for the new Shock Troopers.

"'Colonel, thank you.'" The Marine answered and lined back up with the rest of the new ODSTs.

"'Your new gear awaits in pod bay five. Get geared up and ready for deployment at any moment. Also, your new commanding officer, Captain William Taylor, also known by his nickname ''Scarecrow'' will be waiting for you there. He's gone through a lot, so try not to anger him.'" Colonel Sandman informed and let the ODSTs go so that they can

get geared up and meet their new Captain. After the ODSTs left, Rala approached him, her eyes filled with many questions.

"Why didn't you force them to prove themselves with a test or exercise?" Rala asked as all Sangheili must prove their strength, courage and ingenuity before becoming warriors. Females, though, don't have to prove themselves like that, because they don't get to serve the military. They get trained only for self-defense.

"Humans aren't lone wolves. We don't fight alone. When we fight, we fight together as brothers and sisters in arms. Together we stand but only alone do we fall." John explained something that not all Sangheili can understand, but Rala seemed to understand it as the humans, holding on to this philosophy, managed to hold out for twenty seven years against an unstoppable Empire and they managed to even sever that Empire's unity to the breaking point — a civil war.

"I'm most impressed by you humans!" Rala commented, understanding that true human strength doesn't hide in how they perform alone, but how they perform as an individual in a group. As a family on and off the battlefield.

"Yeah!" John answered while releasing a loud sigh at the same time.

Suddenly and unexpectedly, Commander Lowell contacted Colonel Sandman.

"Colonel, you really need a rest. You haven't slept well in a few days already." The Commander was worried if the Colonel would be able to continue commanding at this rate of sleeplessness.

"Lowell, I am fine!" Suddenly, the Colonel collapsed and fell on the cold, titanium floor of the hangar that he was in. Commander Lowell, realizing that the Colonel fell asleep, contacted Rala instead.

"Uh! Rala, right?" Lowell was rather scared when talking to the Sangheili female.

"Speak." She said as she ran to the Colonel and kneeled down to check if he was alright. Upon hearing him breathe, she understood that he was just sleeping.

"Can you, uh, carry the Colonel to his cabin, please? He hasn't slept in days, you know. He strained himself to the peak! he is no Spartan to be staying awake for days." The Commander kindly asked and Rala could not turn down his request because she felt something develop in her that was directed to the young human Colonel, though she tried to suppress it as hard as she could. If John was a different human, someone that she didn't know or didn't like in any way, she would've just left him there.

"I can't start falling in love with a human that I tried to kill, just because I feel sorry for his losses that were! oh no." Rala thought to herself while slowly picking the Colonel up. After she remembered that she isn't as strong as a male Sangheili she would have a hard time delivering the Colonel back to his damaged cabin. That, or it was just John's heavy battle armor that has a

titanium-ceramic plating.

While carrying John to his cabin, she noticed he started mumbling during his sleep and the crew members that were walking by were in awe. John was having nightmares.

"Clear the elevator to Bridge level!" One of the crewmembers shouted for the elevator to be cleared as soon as he saw the Sangheili female carry the Colonel. The elevator was instantly cleared and Rala could deliver the Colonel to his cabin, where she gently placed him on the bed, but before laying him down on it, she cleared it from the glass and then laid him down.

"Someone needs to watch over him." One of the ODSTs entered John's personal cabin. It was Captain Scarecrow, the one whose arm was cut off by Rala. That arm was replaced by a robotic prosthesis.

"Why?" Rala asked the human Captain that she once mercilessly incapacitated.

"Well, he suffered more than a man of his age would or should, so he's always having trouble in his sleep. If there's someone to calm him down once he wakes up, he'd feel better knowing some people look out for him." Captain Scarecrow explained, but still continued to do that as he stood next to the doors with his helmet held by the robotic arm. "Colonel Sandman cares deeply for his subordinates. Most of all, he cares for his friends and family. As for the family part, I know that he has no family. They all died. He's the only one left of his lineage. I don't know much of his family, but as far as I know, they served the UNSC for centuries." Scarecrow explained while holding his head high, showing his discipline, but refraining from talking loudly as that would disturb John's sleep.

Rala slowly tilted her head downwards, realizing the lies of the High Prophets that were fed to the Sangheili over these twenty seven years. She felt sorry for humans, but most of all, she felt sorry for the man that she befriended "Colonel John Sandman.

"I'd say his parents would be damn proud of their son and his achievements." Captain Scarecrow finished explaining some things about Sandman, saluted, and left. After leaving, the cabin's doors closed and Rala sat down next to the Colonel. She felt slightly uncomfortable while disturbing the Colonel's private space, but she knew that someone had to stay in the room and protect him in case the ship is attacked once again.

Rala couldn't help herself but think about tomorrow. What battles and bloodshed the next day will hold and how they would result.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Fire of Humanity, Bridge, November 17<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 0543 hours by UTC.

><strong>There was a normal every day routine of tweaks and corrections on the bridge when a long-range sensor ping revealed an unordinary battleship, massive in size and scope.

"Commander, I've detected a massive warship heading for Earth." Jessica's hologram popped up from a holo-tank near the Colonel's chair which was temporarily taken by Commander Lowell.

"'What is it? Is it UNSC or Covenant?'" The Commander wanted to know what was that as massive warships aren't an everyday sight.

"'None. I can't properly identify it. Maybe Lord Hood can identify it. Though, all I can say is it's definitely heading for the surface and avoiding any orbital battles.'" Jessica couldn't entirely analyze this new target and decided to send the data to Lord Hood, albeit, Lord Hood already has seen it on Cairo Station's radar.

"'Did you send it to Lord Hood?'" Lowell asked, aching to know if Lord Hood has answers.

"'Yes, I did. But in a short reply from Lord Hood was said that he didn't know what it was, though he sent an order across the NAVCOM to destroy itâ€| waitâ€|'" Jessica heard of new intelligence about the ship. "'â€|there's a SPARTAN Two onboardâ€| it's Sierra One One Seven. Orders?'" Jessica was waiting for orders while the unknown battleship kept coming close and closer.

"'Let it pass. We can't risk it. Damn, maybe that thing has weapons that can cut our ship in half just under a second, so, don't fire on it.'" Commander Lowell was too scared, but he had his reasons because that ship looked extremely high-tech and capable of destroying the UNSC Navy entirely. Little did he know that the ship had no weapons active or installed.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Well, I hope you enjoyed this chapter. As you could see, Rala is developing feelings towards the one that she tried to kill, after she learned a bit about him. It turned out to start a bit sooner than I expected, though. Anyways, I'll spoil you readers a bit - the next chapter will have the Flood.<strong>

## 12. Battle of Earth, November Part 2

\*\*Hey everyone. Bringing you a new and a very long chapter in the story featuring a very interesting event somewhere in the middle. Anyways, I hope you enjoy it. Dive in.

><strong>

\* \* \*

><p><strong>November 17th, 2552, Colonel Sandman's private cabin, UNSC Fire of Humanity, 1144 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*Rala, after a well-slept night, slowly opened her eyes and yawned as silently as she could and sealed her chest plate because she had opened it prior to going to sleep. She was trying to get up from the bed but then she felt a hand wrap around her waist and then she remembered that he was in Colonel Sandman's own cabin. She decided to lie back down on the bed, even though she felt shock and was felt her cheeks blush.

\_ ' 'What if he wakes up and finds me here? What if he gets angry that I used his bed for resting? What if he gets so angry that he orders me to be executed on the spot?''\_ Rala was really scared of the results as her thoughts went further down the road of pessimism. She was too scared, but at the same time very shy. She then heard John

mumbling something.

"'Ralaâ€| please stay for a bitâ€|'" He mumbled and then slowly opened his eyelids only to notice a Sangheili female. Out of shock, he rolled out of the bed and knocked his head against the hard floor, but he didn't go unconscious or receive any damage. Rala then managed to turn around and get up, observing at how John was lying on the floor. His legs were still in the bed while the upper part of his body was on the ground. When she leaned over the edge of the bed, she saw that his cheeks were a bit red, he was blushing just like her.

"'I need a bigger bedâ€|'" John silently whispered to himself, but Rala could definitely hear it and wonder why would he need a bigger bed than he already has, because he already has a rather large bed meant for two humans.

"'Sorryâ€|'" She excused herself and got up from the bed. "'â€|I-I think that it'sâ€| that it's better if I leave the roomâ€|'" Rala stumbled upon words as the shyness took over.

"'No, no it's alright.'" John steadily got up from the floor and rubbed the back of his head slowly. He approached his desk to check his computer for any reports of combat and noticed that the Covenant are withdrawing to Eastern Africa, leaving many areas open for retaking. He also noticed he had dozens of e-mail messages from many military and civilian personnel. He didn't bother to read anything and he just turned off his computer.

"'Soâ€| I hope I didn't disturb your sleepâ€|'" Rala tried to start a dialogue though John was still waking up, even if he looked normal from a distance.

"'Whatâ€|?'" John blinked his eyes many times as his eye sight was a bit blurry after waking up so he had to clear it out by blinking and then his fingers came to assist, by rubbing the eyes. "'Oh, sorry. I was still asleep, even though you could clearly see I was awake.'" John explained his morning clumsiness to Rala and she even silently giggled at that.

John suddenly heard a familiar cadence in the hallways and the sound of it made John remember the good old days of the boot camp.

"'Helljumper, Helljumper, where've you been.''

"'Feet first into hell and back again.'" The singing was getting loud for a while until the sound became more silent and turned into simple echoes.

"'What was that?'" Rala asked out of curiosity.

"'ODST Cadences, Rala. We sing them on PT runs. PT stands for Physical Training.'" John explained the singing of the Marines to Rala, while he got dressed, because apparently, John was sleeping only in his black body suit. He slowly put his ODST armor back on, starting with the boots and ending with the chest plate and the gauntlets. Before leaving his cabin, he grabbed his helmet but didn't put it on his head. Instead, he held it by his side and went straight for the bridge with Rala following closely behind him.

When John entered the bridge, he greeted everyone like if he had a really great sleep.

''Morning, crew. What's new?'' John said upon entering the bridge and the whole bridge crew was afraid that it's not their Colonel anymore. He usually didn't greet anyone in the mornings.

''What? I can't change some things?'' John asked with a big grin on his face while looking over the faces of each bridge officer.

''Sorry, Sir, that was just a bit scary.'' One of the officers spoke in honor of the whole bridge crew.

''Ohâ€|'' John said upon sitting in his personal chair which Commander Lowell left when the Colonel entered the bridge.

''Any news on the ground?'' John wanted to know the latest news.

''Yes, Sir. Major Vorshevsky and the 57th Armored along with the 58th Shock Regiments have taken control of Florence and established a front in Northern Italy that the UNSC Army took over. The two regiments are now waiting for redeployment.'' Jessica, the AI, informed of the latest developments about the ground forces.

''Any suggestions where should we go?'' John wanted the most critical areas to be listed.

''Well, we can always head to London, to rendezvous with the survivors of the UNSC Army Garrison of England and form a counter-attack to retake it. After all, Lord Hood would love to have London standing firmly in UNSC's hands.'' Jessica gave an interesting suggestion and John agreed to do it. He joined a COM channel on which the highest ranking officers of the 57th and 58th Regiments were sitting in.

''All units must go to the fields south of London and await our arrival.'' John gave a simple, but strict order to the two Regiments and put on his helmet.

''You're going too?'' Rala was the first to ask, beating Jessica and Commander Lowell.

''Yes, Rala. You can stay on the ship if you like.'' John didn't want Rala to get involved in this counter-offensive. He was afraid for her life, but Rala was wondering why.

''No, I am not staying here! I am going with you and you will take me with you!'' She demanded to be taken with him and John couldn't do anything else but agree. The extra firepower would be very useful anyways.

''What are you still waiting for?'' John asked once he was already at the exit of the bridge. He polarized his visor and turned back around to leave the bridge. Rala ran after him.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Hangar Bay 01, November 17<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2552. 1221 hours by UTC.

><strong>'Marines, today we're going to pay a little visit to London and meet the Covenant on solidâ€œ well, not so solid but more of a rubble, ground. They've been a pain in our asses since they arrived so let's give them hell once we set feet on the ground.' John made a short speech with a smile while his ODSTs were waiting for the Pelicans to arrive in the hangar bay so that they can be delivered to London. Shortly, the Pelicans arrived and the ODSTs loaded in them, preparing for a bloody fight against the Covenant on the once great European city.

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><p><strong>South of London, 1240 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*The 57th Armored Regiment along with the 58th Shock Regiment had arrived in the designated rendezvous point, but the 89th Shock Trooper Company was still absent, until, Colonel Sandman landed on the ground with a parachute which quickly was sucked back into his rucksack. John's rucksack contained only the parachute so it was largely useless to him and the rest of the company once they landed. Major Vorshevsky immediately looked up in the sky and noticed one hundred and twenty ODSTs dropping from Pelicans via parachutes along with a single Sangheili female who landed right next to the Colonel. The Sangheili female was carrying a flag of the UNSC with her that she handed to Colonel Sandman.

Colonel Sandman, with the flag in his hands, approached one of the men of the 57th Armored Regiment, a Private First Class.

'Private, take this flag. You will have to carry it with honor into the city. Carry it like you carry your weapon, honor the UNSC.' John said upon giving the flag to the Private, but when the Private tried taking it from him, John didn't release it and the Private thought that he did something wrong.

'Do you have what it takes, Marine?' John asked to be sure that the Marine is badass enough to do it.

'Sir, yes Sir!' The Marine answered with a very loud voice that proved that he was more than ready, so John released his tight grip on the flag and armed his MA5C Assault Rifle while having the M90 CAWS on his back. He loaded in a fresh mag into the MA5C and primed it for firing.

'All units, move up!' He gave the signal and all units ranging from Scorpion tanks and Warthogs to Marines and ODSTs moved into the city where they met up with fierce Covenant resistance that was expected. A heavy urban battle ensued with artillery shells flying from both sides, trying to kill as many footsoldiers as it could.

John was sticking behind a low wall, reloading his gun and firing when suddenly, a Wraith-made plasma bomb was about to him directly. Unexpectedly, Rala ran at him and tackled him away from the plasma bomb, saving his life, but at the cost of a fellow Marine who was hiding there with John. Rala was lying over John while both of them were under fire by a few Grunts and Brutes. She was covering him with his body.

While John was under her, he felt the heat of her body even through

all that armor and temperature control systems. He was carried away by thoughts of her, opposite to what he thought upon meeting her that he would never think about her. Then suddenly a Brute kicked Rala away. The Brute seemed to be unshielded so John aimed his MA5C directly at the Brute's face and emptied his clip that still had twenty five projectiles in it. The Brute was killed and it fell on the ground almost instantly, while John got up on his feet and approached Rala, whose shields were brought down. He noticed a big dent in Rala's armor and immediately took a can of biofoam from a nearby medic who was ready to assist in any way. John wanted to spray the biofoam over the dent but Rala grabbed his arm and slowly got firmly back up on her feet.

"'No. I am not wounded.'" She said as she quickly aimed her Covenant Carbine over John's shoulder and made perfect headshots on five Grunts and one Brute.

"'I only wanted what's breastâ€œ! fuckâ€œ! I mean, best for you.'" John began stumbling on his own words when he turned around with his heel in pure shyness and began aiming with his rifle at the Covenant that were dug in just two hundred meters away from the two UNSC Regiments.

"'I know you care about your subordinates, but, I am not your direct subordinate, just a friend andâ€œ! what did you mean by "'breast' '?''" Rala felt really strange when John began stumbling on his words. A moment of silence followed. The silence was not made by a lack of gunfire, there was still a lot of it, but John didn't answer. He ran to the nearby wall instead to hide behind it while reloading his rifle when suddenly a Brute with a Gravity Hammer passed right by him.

"'Rala, stop standing there idly! Please, MOVE!'" John wanted to scream but he couldn't, knowing that the Brute would smash his head with the Hammer, so instead of screaming, John waited for the Brute to make a few more steps forward and he attacked it from behind with his combat knife. He stabbed the Brute a few times in the neck and one time in the head where the knife penetrated the Brute's cranium and instantly killed it. John removed his knife from the Brute's skull and jumped away just in time to escape getting smashed on the ground with the body of the alien gorilla.

He waved for Rala to run to him and so she did, although she was amazed at how quickly John took down the Brute.

"'Are you going to answer my question?'" Rala asked as soon as she reached John in cover.

"'Look, I stumbled on words, alright? That doesn't mean anything.'" John wanted to think that it meant nothing but something was forming within him about Rala. Something that made him slowly like her even more.

"'Ohâ€œ! alrightâ€œ!'" Rala didn't have one of the luckiest talks with John, because she couldn't see his facial expression as it was covered by his black visor.

"'Pst! Hey, Elite.'" One of the UNSC Marines, a Medic who was located on a higher location just two meters from Rala, called.

''Yes?'' Rala answered when she spotted the one calling her.

''The Colonel likes you.'' The Medic informed Rala of something that she wanted to know ever since she went asleep the day before.

''How can you tell?'' She whispered back to the Medic so that John doesn't hear anything.

''Well, humans stumble on words when talking to their love interest. Mainly males stumble upon them, but females do too. Common words that men stumble upon are ''breast'' and some other I forgot. I had this thing too, soâ€¦ yeah. Try your luck, but don't push too hard.'' The Medic explained, gave a friendly suggestion to Rala and then returned back to treating a wounded Marine.

\_ ''What? Soâ€¦ that's why he wasn't so angry at me when he flew out of his own bed thanks to me?''\_ Rala thought to herself, but her thoughts were disturbed by John who was in need of her help.

''Rala, I could use your sharpshooter skills right now.'' John said while firing back at the incoming Covenant Company of footsoldiers that was led by seven Brutes and the main force of it consisted of one hundred Grunts and thirty Jackals.

''Alright.'' Rala responded and rolled into cover behind a destroyed wall on the opposite side of the street that John was on. She leaned out of cover and began picking off Covenant footsoldiers with her Carbine while John was keeping them busy with his MA5C. Suddenly, an explosion right in the middle of the Covenant Company caused the Grunts to panic. John looked behind to find the source of the explosion and it was made by an M808 MBT ''Scorpion'' nicknamed ''Brute Basher''.

''Looks like our tanks can finally get through this rubble!'' John raised his rifle in the air for a second to celebrate the entry of the tanks to the battlefield of London.

''Colonel Sandman, I am going to take the 57th Armored Regiment away from you temporarily. I need them at Voi.'' Lord Hood contacted Colonel Sandman at a very inappropriate moment.

''Sir, this really isn't the time.'' Colonel Sandman answered while emptying his rifle's clip into the Covenant.

''I really need them in there, son. Can I count on their arrival within the hour?'' Lord Hood was gathering forces for a counter-attack against the Covenant.

''Alright, Sir, I'll tell Major Vorshevsky to leave London at once and get to you.'' John answered slowly and painfully as he now had to rely on one regiment to secure a mega metropolis possibly filled with Covenant in every street.

''Vorshevsky and the 57th must retreat and rendezvous with the Marines in Voi at once.'' John informed the two regiments that one of them must leave this battle.

''Sir, we can't leave you behind!'' Major Vorshevsky wasn't about to leave without a fight.

''You must leave London now and help Lord Hood! That's a fucking order!'' John didn't see this as a proper time to argue with anyone, so he shouted an order right in the COM channel to which the whole regiment had to comply.

''Alright, Sir, but we're leaving the ''Brute Basher'' with you.'' Major Vorshevsky and his regiment left the battle, but left a single tank for the Colonel. John could see two and a half thousand UNSC Marines leaving the battle in order, firing back at the Covenant. Suddenly, John could hear a Wraith plasma bomb heading for Rala.

''Rala! Get the fuck out of there!'' John screamed for her to run but she couldn't hear anything due to the intense battle, so John ran to tackle her away, like she tackled him. When John pushed her out of the way, the bright blue plasma bomb landed close to him and blew him away and he hit the right thread of the ''Brute Basher'', falling unconscious on the spot.

Rala, after realizing what just happened, immediately ran to the tank to find John and find him she did, only he was out cold and had his left leg burned as well as insignificant chest armor trauma.

''Colonel, what's going on?'' Captain Scarecrow wanted to know what just happened to him, but he received no answer from his CO, so instead, he received an answer from Rala 'Thenam.

''He's unconscious, I think. Where's the nearest medical checkpoint?'' Rala's voice was filled with sadness as Scarecrow could hear.

''Just hold on, there's a hotel three hundred meters from here andâ€¦ what theâ€¦ the Covenant Loyalists are retreating deeper into the city!'' Captain Scarecrow said as the Covenant were retreating chaotically to the Thames river.

''You mentioned a hotel?'' Rala asked as she picked John up and put him on the side thread of the tank. She hopped on the threat herself as the tank began moving forward slowly.

''Yeah, I told the driver of the tank to get you there.'' Captain Scarecrow informed her and sent a squad of ODSTs to protect the tank while he and the 89th Shock Trooper Company went forth to secure a perimeter around the hotel that was getting closer and closer.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Near Voi, November 17<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2552. 1329 hours by UTC.

><strong>''Hey, Major, looks like we've missed out on the start of the party because the battle is in full swing right now.'' The pilot of the D77H-TCI Pelican dropship informed the Major who was standing right next to him in the cockpit.

''Land us somewhere near the back ranks so that we can regroup and reorganize.'' Major Vorshevsky gave new landing coordinates for the pilot.

''Alright.'' The pilot acknowledged and began the landing

sequence.

Most of the D77H-TCI Pelicans transporting the regiment had the troop deployment pod extension of the dropship that allows them to transport up to thirty UNSC combat personnel. Once the Pelicans landed, roughly three thousand Marines plus vehicles were dropped off. The numerous Pelican squadrons then returned back to where they came from, while the gunship versions had to pull back to London. The gunship versions of the D77H-TCI Pelicans carried four 70mm Autocannons, two on each wing and a 90mm smoothbore high velocity cannon on the ventral fore of the dropship as well as having two missile pods per wing. A flying arsenal that is superior to many gunships.

"'Regiment, rally up!'" Major Vorshevsky exclaimed over the COM channel, preparing for an attack against the Covenant.

"'We're heading into the city of Voi and securing it to evac civilians, so get moving and don't fire neither on civilians, nor on Elites!'" The Major gave the optional objectives along with the main objective for the regiment and they moved out, to head to Voi and beat the Loyalists still holding the city.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>London, In a hotel, 1654 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*The air above London was clouded with dark clouds and it began raining. Raining heavily. The drops of water hitting against the glass of the windows, bouncing off the ceramic-titanium armor of the UNSC Marines, ODSTs and the vehicles. The rain made the whole situation seem like a desperate struggle for humanity.

><strong><br>\*\*Rala entered a room of the hotel in which John was in and noticed that he was still unconscious. She sat down on a nearby chair to wait for him to get back up, but the wait wasn't long as John woke up almost instantly after Rala sat down.

"'Johnâ€|?'" Rala was unsure if she was dreaming or if he was waking up. John noticed that Rala called him by his name for the first time. That, or he just never paid attention to the other times, if they existed.

"'Yeah, why is it so hot in here?'" John complained as soon as he woke up. Suddenly, he heard Rala rush over to him and give him a warm hug, though John felt awkward and so did Rala. The both of them blushed intensely when John slowly grabbed Rala by her waist and tried to push her off but his arm accidentally slipped and went to grab her breast. It definitely wasn't John's day.

He quickly corrected his mistake by pulling his hand away almost immediately and he began blushing with a new intensity.

"'Sorryâ€|'" Rala said while backing off from John. She noticed John slowly getting out of the bed and starting to limp across the room that the two were in, alone.

"'Did the Loyalists shelter their asses in the Tower of London?'" John wanted an answer to this question to prepare for an infiltration. John asked that question, because he wanted to get his mind off of the uneasy moment that the two were in just a minute ago. He kept staring outside at the darkness caused by the clouds and the

rain.

"'Yes.'' Rala answered shortly and began playing with her fingers out of shyness. Suddenly, John could hear a crack in the ceiling and so could Rala. John tried to run towards her but then she stopped him, pushed him aside and jumped away herself, letting the ceiling fall down without any of the two being the heroes' injured heroes. The rain started pouring straight into the room, while the two came closer to each other.

"'Look, Rala I won't hold for long so I have to tell you something.'' John looked away and closed his eyes to gather courage, but visions of the past didn't let him do that. He just had to rely on his feelings, instead of what he saw behind closed eyes, or tried to see behind them.

"'Yes?'' Rala carefully looked at John, into his eyes as the two got closer to each other. They shared a look with each other as their heads got closer and the two tried to suppress their feeling of awkwardness. John's hands slowly went around the area of Rala's waist and secured her in his hands.

"'Iâ€|'' He tried to admit that he loves her, but he couldn't tell it without remembering Jessica. Rala touched his forehead with hers to try and give him the courage to reveal those feelings that he's trying to admit. Finally, John got tired of his weakness and locked down all memories of Jessica. ''I like you, Rala.'' He finally said it, though not in the form he wished, he still said it. ''In these short days, after we met properly, I felt something brewing within meâ€| I also felt something back in the start of the Battle of Earthâ€|'' John explained when he began developing these feelings. His natural wish to kill the one that brutally slaughtered his best men turned into love and respect.

"'Iâ€| I don't knowâ€| I justâ€|'' Rala tried responding to this moment of revelations, but John hushed her by putting a finger in front of her mouth.

"'Shhhâ€| don't explain anything.'' John said as he attempted to plant a kiss on her mouth out of love. Size of the both of them wasn't a barrier they were roughly of the same size as John was an exceptionally tall human being roughly two meters tall and Rala was approximately the same size, though John was only shorter than a SPARTAN, the barrier was his lack of knowledge on how to properly kiss a Sangheili female, so he tried to plant it on her mandibles. Rala knew that he was trying it the right way and soon received a kiss, which was disturbed when Captain Scarecrow barged in the room by opening the doors loudly. The pair's romantic moment was interrupted and Scarecrow looked at the awkwardly before stating the reason why he was disturbing the two.

"'Colonel, we've surrounded the Tower of London and have received Pelican gunship support. Orders?'' Captain Scarecrow explained while still looking at the two holding each other close.

"'Begin the assault.'' Colonel Sandman responded but he didn't release Rala, neither did she release him while she was holding her arms around his neck.

"'Yes, Sir and sorry, Sir.'' The Captain excused and immediately

left. He whispered silently to himself not to tell anyone of what he just saw in that room.

"That was rather rude." Rala commented and looked back into John's hazel eyes that were pointed at her, forming an eye contact again. John sighed, realizing there is no way back now, not in the siege and most definitely not in his new relationship with Rala.

"What about you, Rala? Do youâ€| love me?" John asked, just to be sure if the feelings are mutual.

"Iâ€| Iâ€| " Rala was lingering to give away the answer, but since John had already admitted, she didn't want to keep it in. "I do." She answered and gave a kiss using her lower mandibles right on John's lips and the two shared a brief romantic moment until Rala realized that John didn't entirely admit his love to her so she pulled away, but slowly.

"Waitâ€| you justâ€| like me?" Rala asked and then John smirked, seeing as how she wanted the full sentence out of him.

"Rala 'Thenam, I love you!" John admitted entirely as he already had the courage to do so with his memories of Jessica completely out of the way, replaced by thoughts of the future. The two then hugged for a while until a loud explosion disturbed them. The siege of the Tower had begun.

"I guess that's our signal to begin. Let's go." John released Rala and ran towards his bed, where his helmet was lying. He quickly picked up the helmet, put it on, polarized his visor and left the room, grabbing an MA5C on the way.

"This here is an anti-son-of-a-bitch-machine that will kill any ape, jackass or methane-breathing motherfucker in its way." John slightly bragged about the power of an MA5C assault rifle, praising it and the survivability that it has given to John in its short, but useful career in John's hands.

"What about the Hunters?" Rala asked out of curiosity upon exiting the hotel and nearing the "Brute Basher" M808 MBT Scorpion tank.

"For that, my dear Rala, we have that thing behind you." John pointed at the M808 Main Battle Tank behind her. "When it spews lead out of its ninety millimeter cannon, no worm with battleplating can survive." John praised the firepower of the Scorpion tank.

"I see." Rala observed the tank for a while and heard its deafening shot fire and hit a wall on the Tower, destroying a section of it and allowing some Marines passage once they manage to get past the defenses of the Loyalists.

"Rala, come on!" John shouted for Rala to join him in cover along with two more Marines. One of the Marines stood up from the cover at an inappropriate moment and two needles hit him in the neck. The Marine struggled to catch a breath and with the blood coming out of his neck along with the mouth and nose, so he fell on the ground until the needles exploded with his head. The explosion scratched the nearby Marine's and John's armor without doing anything to Rala's armor.

''I forgot how much the Needlers PISS ME OFF!'' John shouted and fired his MA5C out of cover, at the London Tower. Without him knowing, he actually managed to pick off two Grunts and clip a Jackal's tooth off while he was keeping his mouth open.

''Sir, we can push across the Tower Bridge. I just hope it'll hold our sixty-six ton tank.'' One of the Marines informed while he was trying to get up closer to the Tower by attempting to cross the bridge.

''Alright Helljumpers, it's about time we crushed the Covenant in Europe! Oorah?'' John ran around Rala and ran straight towards the bridge, under heavy fire from plasma rifles and carbines. Still, he managed to run across the bridge and establish a perimeter all by himself on the other side. The ODSTs immediately began following, but they did it only after Rala began charging across. One of the ODSTs slipped and fell, being in danger of getting himself killed by a Carbine shot.

''Oh no! Oh no!'' The ODST prayed that he doesn't get killed and Rala ran right in front of the shot that was aimed at him, sacrificing her own energy shields for the protection of a human. She picked him up with one hand while firing her Carbine at the Covenant from the other.

''Get moving, Helljumper!'' She shouted at the ODST so that he can hear her order, he simply nodded, albeit nervously, and began running across the bridge as soon as Rala released him. Rala then began running across herself, avoiding the plasma bolts sent her way by the Covenant. When she joined up with the rest of the ODST company on the Northern end of the bridge, the Covenant couldn't fire on her because she was away from their firing arc.

''Alright, you two, blow the fuck out of that wall right there. The rest of the company must get ready for an immediate large scale breach and clear. Are you all ready?'' Colonel Sandman issued his orders to the 89th Shock Trooper Company and wanted to know if they're up for this task.

The ODSTs consulted with each other for a while, in the meantime, Captain Scarecrow came by John's side. He stood up and raised his BR55HB Service Rifle in the air with his robotic arm.

''What are we?'' He asked the question to the entire company of one hundred brave men and women.

''We're!'' One of the ODST's tried to answer and then stood up.  
''We're Marine Special Forces!'' He said bravely.

''Yes, exactly! We're Marines! We're Helljumpers. Where do we go to regroup?'' The Captain asked another question while Rala and John stared at each other.

''What's he doing?'' Rala asked, curious of what Scarecrow was doing.

''Raising morale and fighting spirit.'' John answered and he got up to join the talks.

"'We go to hell to regroup!'" John answered a question that wasn't answered for two minutes.

"'We'll go to hell right behind us, regroup and kill every motherfucking ape, jackal, plated worm or frontline meat we find! And then? Thenâ€œ we'll ask for more!'" The Captain made an inspiring speech, raising the morale. The entire company stood up on their feet.

"'OORAH!'" The one hundred Helljumpers shouted and two of them immediately ran towards the wall to plant four charges on it.

"'It's a good thing the Covenant damaged the Tower beyond recognition, otherwise Lord Hood would have our asses tossed to Venus for blowing a hole in it.'" Captain Scarecrow was considering some other thoughts and how the Colonel's current order to blow a wall might punish the entire company. The Tower is a cultural heritage of humanity's past, after all.

"'Yeahâ€œ'" John agreed with Scarecrow completely, looking in the air for a brief moment and noticed a D77H-TCI Gunship Pelican in the air, firing its chain guns at the Covenant inside the Tower.

"'Alright, charges set.'" The plastic explosives were planted and the Helljumpers stepped a bit away. The explosives detonated and brought down the entire section of the wall, even though there was one bit further to the North.

"'Move it! Go, go, go!'" John ordered the Helljumpers to pour through the gap in the wall and begin killing the Covenant. Suddenly, multiple Phantoms and Seraphs arrived just over the Tower, beginning to pick up the Covenant while the Seraphs intercepted and destroyed the Pelican Gunship.

"'Don't let them escape! Quick, get the rocket launcher up!'" Captain Scarecrow ordered the Helljumpers to smash down the dropships. Five ODSTs came up with M41 SSR MAV/AW rocket launchers in their hands and awaited John's signal. John pointed his index finger at the dropships and then pulled it back in. The ODST's understood that as the signal to fire and fired ten rockets out of the double barreled rocket launchers, two each. The rockets immediately shot down three out of five Phantoms and crippled another, though it was still able to fly away along with the fifth Phantom. The Phantoms though were shot down by 50mm point defense gun fire coming from an unknown ship. When John turned around, he noticed the UNSC Fire of Humanity hovering just above the city of London.

"'Holy shit. I never thought I'd see her hovering above a city.'" John commented as he looked in awe on the ship that just had landed and began engaging the multiple Covenant fighters that were in the city.

"'I heard you need an airspace clean from this flying rubble, so we decided to lend a hand.'" Commander Lowell joked on the COMs while the UNSC Fire of Humanity was firing its point defense guns at the Covenant Seraphs. A while later, the Longsword squadrons attached to the ship arrived to drive off the Covenant Air Force from the continent.

John took off his helmet and threw it into the air, cheerfully, as

the Phoenix-class Battlecruiser didn't let a single Covenant Loyalist escape London. There was still some struggle here and there, but the 58th Shock Regiment was keeping the Covenant isolated, preventing them from escape.

John's helmet had landed a distance away, while John and Rala climbed the nearby wall to look at the ruins of London. The polarized visor of the helmet was perfectly reflecting the two standing on the wall. John suddenly let his arm wrap across Rala's waist.

"Bye bye." John bid farewell to the Covenant as they were all getting executed by the human Marines.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Meanwhile, Voi. 1801 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*The 57th Armored Regiment was holding the city of Voi from an enemy that can revive their dead and turn those against anyone. It was an enemy called the Flood.

A Marine was shivering in fear, trying to keep the barrel of his MA5C aimed at a Flood Form attacking him.

"Shit! Shit, shit, shit!" The Marine cursed as he was afraid to kill a Flood Combat Form, a deceased human Marine. He was almost bashed away but the timely arrival of a pair of Marines, who bashed the Flood Form away, saved his life. The Marines shot the limbs off the Combat Form and even began arguing of who actually bashed it away.

"Alright Marines. We've got reports that SPARTAN One One Seven is on his way to a downed Covenant Battlecruiser not too far away from here, so let's secure him a passage. Spread out and do what you can." Major Vorshevsky issued his order to his battle-torn regiment. Out of the two and a half thousand UNSC Marines that arrived with him at the start of the battle, only six hundred, a single Marine battalion, remain, because the most were caught off-guard by the arrival of a new enemy â€“ the Flood.

Major Vorshevsky tried contacting his superior, Colonel Sandman.

"Colonel, we've got a new enemy here in Africa. Wish you were here with the fifty eighth, because the fifty seventh got decimated." Major Vorshevsky wished that he and the rest of the Marines were at Voi.

"Yeah, we're celebrating our victory at London. We've taken heavy casualties ourselves as well. Out of the original three thousand, we have only one thousand Marines left. We'll try to get there ASAP." John promised his regiment's support and Vorshevsky was happy to hear that.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Forward Unto Dawn (FFG-201), Bridge.<br>\*\*There was disarray across the UNSC strike force that was assaulting the Artifact, mainly aboard the Forward Unto Dawn's bridge.

"Admiral, here's a report of the battles that ended once the

Covenant left Earth through the portal.'' An Ensign gave the Admiral a datapad containing the report of all the battles on Earth that were still raging up to November 17th.

Lord Hood skipped his eyes over all of them, because all were either pyrrhic victories, either decisive victories. He stopped skipping battles when he noticed the Battle of London, which was a pyrrhic victory for the UNSC Marine Corps and not a total loss. In the report it said that the city was completely devastated, but some cultural heritages were still intact, like portions of the Tower of London and the Big Ben. The success at London took the lives of more than ten thousand UNSC Army Infantrymen and over two thousand UNSC Marines and the Orbital Defense Generator of London's Orbital Defense Platform. No Covenant made its way back to Voi, every alien in London was executed on the spot. Every Loyalist, that is.

\_ ''Thank God England wasn't ruined completely. At least I could finally settle down my life somewhere there once I decide to do so.'' Lord Hood thought to himself as he finished viewing the report. He didn't want to settle down too soon, though, as he knew that humanity needed and would need officers like him now and in the near future.

Suddenly, several slips were detected in high Earth orbit made by a Covenant CAS-class Assault Carrier. The crew of the Dawn was put on high alert until the radars of the UNSC vessels still in orbit confirmed them as ships owned by the Sangheili, human allies. Their capital ship, a CAS-class Assault Carrier Shadow of Intent made an immediate descent to Africa.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>En-route to Voi, Kenyan Protectorate, Africa. 1822 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*The 58th Shock Regiment along with John Sandman and Rala 'Thenam was being delivered on dozens of D77H-TCI Pelican dropships and escorted by three GA-TL1 Longsword Strike Fighters. The Pelicans were flying over the city of Nairobi at an altitude of one kilometer and two hundred meters when they spotted a Covenant Assault Carrier speeding past them. It was quickly identified as a Covenant Separatist, a UNSC ally, warship â€“ the Shadow of Intent.

''Woah.'' One of the UNSC Marine Corps pilots was scared that it might begin picking them off, but John came in the cockpit to calm them down, after receiving a confirmation from Rala if that truly is an allied ship.

''Relax you two, it's the Shadow of Intent, the Elite ship. It's probably here in hunt of the Covenant Loyalists.'' John tried to calm the pilots down and he really did convince the pilots that it was an allied ship.

''Alright, Colonel.'' The pilots calmed down and noticed CCS-class Battlecruisers descending to Africa as well when the Pelican squadrons approached Voi. Upon approaching Voi and descending to an altitude of thirty meters, they noticed the streets littered with bodies. Marines, Covenant, and unknown forms. Forms that were identified as the Flood by John's Visual Intelligence System, Reconnaissance (VISR), that was built into his helmet, just like any other ODST's helmet.

''Yuck. I don't want to be used by that thing.'' John commented upon realizing that the Flood revive dead bodies and turn them into zombie-parasite like creatures.

''All units currently en-route to Voi and all units in East Africa, get away now. The Flood infestation is about to get under control.'' A UNSC Naval representative informed the entire UNSC force in Africa. The forces began to retreat in order, making sure the Flood do not follow.

''Colonel, perhaps you have some spare seats in your dropships?'' Major Vorshevsky asked as he waved below the Pelican squadrons that were hovering above the 57th Armored Regiment's position. The Pelicans began landing and loading up on Marines and taking the vehicles with them as well. Suddenly, Flood began coming out of nowhere.

''Holy shit!'' One of the Pelican pilots panicked and immediately attempted to take off, but the Flood jumped on his dropship and began seizing control. The Marines inside were all getting slaughtered and turned into mindless beasts until another Pelican fired its nose mounted chain gun and wing-mounted missiles at the captured dropship and destroyed it, ensuring the safety of the rest of the planet.

''Shit!'' John cursed as he readied his MA5C for combat against the Flood, while Major Vorshevsky was running to get inside the Pelican. Two Flood Combat Forms jumped on the Pelican and began smashing its cockpit's windows. John took aim on one of them and fired, opening the window and killing the parasite. Once Major Vorshevsky arrived, he immediately shot the parasite's limbs off.

''You have to shoot the limbs to render the bodies useless, Sir!'' Major Vorshevsky suggested and instead of taking aim for the head, John took aim for the arms of the beast. He emptied the rest of his clip into it, opening another hole in the cockpit, but tearing only one arm out of two off.

''Take off, Marine!'' John ordered the pilot to take off immediately and the pilot complied with the order, taking off at once. The squadrons of Pelicans, now overloaded with Marines, turned back and went towards the UNSC Fire of Humanity that was slowly approaching Voi.

While the Pelicans were flying towards the Battlecruiser, John was carefully listening to where might the Combat Form be. Suddenly, that Combat Form jumped inside the Pelican and lunged at Rala, who was standing near a bunch of Marines. The Combat Form tried tearing open her chest armor and she yelled for help. While the Marines took aim, John kicked the bastard off in anger that he was attacking Rala and fired a fresh clip straight at every limb it had left. He then pulled a grenade out, dragged the beast to the edge of the Pelican's troop bay, removed the safety pin of the grenade, stuck it in the Combat Form's mouth and kicked it off the troop bay's edge. The resulting explosion, a few hundred meters away, tore the Combat Form's body into pieces, but it was killed for sure. The squadrons entered the Fire of Humanity's hangar bays soon after as the ship itself was not too far away from Voi.

John turned around and went closer to Rala to see if she's alright,

but noticed her chest piece was badly damaged from the many scratches that the Combat Form dealt on her. Rala could get up herself, but her right leg got wounded somehow after the Flood Form attacked her, so she needed John's help to move around. John attached his MA5C to his back and let Rala put her arm around his neck.

"'I'll get you to my cabin!'" John was worried if Rala didn't receive any other injuries and tried to look at her chest piece, but Rala covered it with her other arm.

"'No peeking.'" She said with a smile on her face while the two were slowly heading for the Colonel's personal cabin.

"'I have a strange feeling about what you just said. But never mind that feeling.'" John commented as he had a feeling that Rala was thinking of something between the two of them.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Well, looks like John has finally revealed his feelings to Rala and so did she reveals her feelings towards him. A short time passed and they developed relations. Strange, isn't it?  
Heh.<br>Anyways, thank you for reading and also I would like to see your opinion on one thought in a review.  
>Should Colonel John Sandman become a SPARTAN-IV and get issued MJOLNIR GEN2 Powered Assault Armor and which model of it?<br>Thank you for your opinions in advance.\*\*

### 13. Lifechanging Events

\*\*Hey, bringing you another chapter in Halo: Shock Troopers. I have to say, Halo: Shock Troopers is nearing its end, but do not worry. That doesn't mean it's the end of all the characters and ships in the story. I have made a decision with my brother from another mother - Toruscan - to create a co-story with his characters. A Mass Effect/Halo crossover. Anyways, enjoy this chapter that has been brought to your attention now. Also, there is a rather detailed scene in the middle of the chapter and unless you are ready, for your own sake and if you do not like Sangheili (Elites), do not read it. Just skip it.

><strong>

\* \* \*

><p><strong>November 17th, 2552. 1901 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*A small fleet of Sangheili ships passed through a portal that was opened directly above the Forerunner artifact near Voi. The fleet of ten ships plus some UNSC frigates were in hunt of the High Prophet of Truth, to stop his evil plans once and for all. Colonel John Sandman's ship, the UNSC Fire of Humanity, had to delay due to an interesting proposal given to the commanding officer of the ship.

"'Do you accept, Colonel?'" An ONI Agent in grey clothes and dark shades on his eyes asked.

"'Becoming a Spartan Four? Hell! as long as I don't lose any of my capabilities!'" John was lingering for a moment to give the answer coming out of his heart, because once he receives the Spartan

augmentations, he will never change back. Never. He looked at Rala to convince himself that he will make the right choice. "I accept." He said with a trembling voice of fear, but the ONI Agent them proceeded to comfort him.

"Do not worry, Colonel. Your reproductive functions will not cease their usefulness as our genetic enhancements and augmentations will not do anything much to them. Well, they won't destroy those functions or cripple them." The Agent said but that didn't do much to ease John's mind as the bridge crew, along with the wounded Rala 'Thenam watched the Agent direct John away to a medical bay that was secretly fitted for genetic therapies.

"Wait! I am not going to stay behind and hope that everything is alright with him! I want to come along and see for myself that he survives!" Rala was very insistent and there was nothing the Agent could do.

"As you wish, though the sight may not be pretty." The Agent warned and the trio proceeded to a medical lab.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Fire of Humanity, Secret Medical Laboratory, 1910 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*Colonel Sandman entered the medical laboratory's procedure room which was isolated by walls and windows from all sides. He was standing only in underwear, revealing his already muscular body and unordinary height.

"Please, lie down on the table and press the button once you are ready. The augmentation process might knock you out for a few hours, if you aren't completely ready." The Agent announced over the loudspeakers while he, at least a dozen scientists and Rala were watching from the control room. John lied down on the table and pressed a button which signaled the beginning of the augmentation therapy. Many needles were arranging to perfectly penetrate vital areas of John's body, where the chemical mixtures could be injected for maximum effect and a scientist came in from behind to observe a quick change of Neural Interfaces in the back of John's head. Soon after, the many needles neared John's body and he closed his eyes, getting ready for the pain.

The needles finally entered John's body, from thighs and his abdomen up to his very skull, injecting chemical mixtures of many colors, smells and chemical substances in them that would permanently enhance his capabilities like reflexes, strength, stamina and so on, but the process was very painful. John was screaming in agony, while Rala was looking at him suffer in pain. She even attempted to break into the room John was in, but got restrained by eight ODSTs, so she was forced to watch her beloved human suffer. She shed a few tears even.

"I warned you that the sight would be painful." The Agent repeated his warning and he already figured out that Rala had feelings for the Colonel. While repeating his warning, the Agent was fixing some things in Colonel Sandman's profile, mainly his new service branch and his capabilities as the process of augmentation was nearing its end.

"Sir, the new GEN Two armor for the Captain has now arrived and is

waiting in his cabin. We've also installed an armor removal/assembly station in one of the pod bays. Bay one to be more precise.'' One of the Agent's assistants informed and called John a ''Captain''. This was because a Marine ''Colonel'' is an equal rank to the Navy's ''Captain'' and John Sandman was transferred to the Navy due to him being a SPARTAN-IV now. When the Agent turned back around to view the ''Captain's'' augmentation process, he noticed that it was done and he didn't even raise an eyebrow as if he was expecting this. He immediately went to the nearby doors leading inside the procedure room. When he entered the room, he immediately observed Captain Sandman.

''Hmâ€| yes, your height has increased by a small fraction and you seem to be two meters and eight centimeters tall right now. Muscular mass increased. Now, a basic test if you must.'' The Agent put his hand behind his back and pulled out a small ball that the Captain must catch at a range of two meters. The Agent threw it without warning and Captain Sandman, seemingly with a reaction of superluminal speeds, caught the ball and gave it back to the Agent.

''Very well. Your reflexes are confirmed, muscular mass confirmed and there are still dozens of tests that we must run, but I fear time has been cut short. Your new armor is waiting for you in your room and the armor station is in pod bay one. Have a good day.'' The Agent bid farewell and left, but not before making a hand gesture for the ODSTs to let Rala go. Once the ODSTs slowly stepped back, Rala got up on her feet and seemingly blew the closer Helljumpers away from her as she ran in to hug John. John didn't try to reach and Rala jumped on him, her hands tying around his neck for a hug. John's hands tied around her waist and he tried slowly to raise her from the ground, something that he has never attempted to do previously because of doubts. Doubts that he wouldn't be able to raise her from the ground because she was a Sangheili, and all Sangheili are heavier than humans.

''Are you alright?'' Rala silently whispered into John's ear while enjoying the hug, but failing to notice that she has been lifted from the floor. The ODSTs watching the two were in shock.

''Iâ€| the pain is still in me, butâ€| I am fine.'' John replied as he felt stronger and faster than ever, but he knew that he won't be a normal human anymore. He even noticed that his voice got deeper than usual.

The two shared a hug for a while until the ship's AI â€" Jessica â€" announced over the loudspeakers about an update.

''All personnel, prepare for immediate entry into the slipspace anomaly as per Lord Hood's orders.''

''Hmâ€| I guess the fight keeps on going.'' John said as he released Rala and she landed softly on her feet. Only then she noticed that John was holding her above the floor.

''Wowâ€|'' Rala was amazed at his new strength, but then remembered that John has new gear in his cabin. ''â€|I think we should get back to your room.'' She suggested and then John smirked and began correcting Rala.

"Our room, Rala. Our." He said as he went outside the procedure room and past the ODSTs who were awed at their Colonel who was transferred from the Marine Corps to the Navy as a Captain.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Sandman's personal cabin, 1933 hours by UTC.<br>\*Upon entering his cabin, he noticed a fully black armor with a black metallic undersuit and a golden visor. The armor seemed to perfectly fit his height and when he approached and touched it, he felt it was completely different from his old ODST battle uniform. The armor plating was thicker, a lot thicker, and more durable. He approached the undersuit that was carefully placed on a nearby chair and began dressing it on. It was perfectly fitting his muscular body. When he finally put it on, he heard Rala come in the room and checking him out.

"Well, that's interesting." She commented on his new armor while looking at him, not at the armor. Rala then heard a few technicians come to the cabin and opened the doors for them. The dozen technicians seemingly rushed in the room with equipment in their hands.

"Captain, we're here to deliver the suit to pod bay one where it'll be installed on your undersuit with ease." The technician said and immediately went towards the armor, assuming that the Captain gave a go by being silent.

"Alright, let's go." After a short moment of being silent, John answered and the dozen technicians plus Rala and John went to pod bay one that was numerous decks below.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Pod Bay One, UNSC Fire of Humanity, 1942 hours by UTC.<strong>

>The technicians along with Rala and the Captain arrived at pod bay one where the techs began dividing the armor by pieces and attaching it to various "hands" of the armor unit that was left here by ONI.<p>

"Captain, please step in here to begin the process." The technician pointed at the base of the armored boots and John approached them, but before stepping in them he had to turn around and so he did. He then stepped on the base of the boots and they sealed tight, beginning the process of assembling the armor.

The armor was being assembled and sealed on all parts of his body at once, from legs to the chest and hands and John could feel it somehow beginning to affect him. It didn't feel heavy as his augmented strength made it feel very light, the armor made him feel slightly faster and even stronger. When the armor was fully assembled, the armor unit detached its locks from John and allowed him to move away from it. Then, a technician gave John his new helmet that seemed similar to his ODST helmet. It seemed to be a mix between ODST and Spartan helmets. John took the helmet and slowly put it on his head. He could see the heads-up display immediately recognizing him and activating showing the shields, motion sensor, weapons, grenades and a compass that doesn't work in space, but instead was showing the "North" of the ship â€“ the fore. It did seem quite similar to his

old ODST helmet, but it was more advanced.

"Captain, please move your arms out." The technician kindly asked and John complied, moving his arms out in front of him while the techs, the ODSTs around him and Rala were watching. The technician seemed to be writing something down on his personal datapad.

"Good, now walk around. Get used to the armor." The tech said. John then lowered his arms and began to walk around. He attempted to jump and when he did so, he jumped twice as higher than he used to when he was an ODST. Upon landing on the ground, he made a big noise when his metal boots landed on the titanium floor.

"Intriguing." The technician commented and then approached the new Spartan.

"Try activating your VISR and tell us what do you see." The tech wanted to test out the MJOLNIR GEN2's Visual Intelligence System, Reconnaissance. John activated the VISR and every person was immediately outlined in green. The doors and pods were outlined in orange color.

"Living beings are outlined in green, I assume the enemy is the old red. Vehicles and doors are outlined in orange." John described how the VISR changed the HUD.

"Excellent. You are very well accustomed to the VISR system since the ODST's have it as well, but one thing in this VISR differs is that it can see through walls. That's a difference between life and death for many." The technician explained and John then looked at his own hands and turned off his VISR just by thinking to turn it off, thanks to his new Spartan Neural Implant that quickly replaced his old Neural Implant during augmentations. The old ODST VISR was able to be turned off just like this one and so John grew accustomed to this almost instantly, if not for the fact that this VISR outlines friends and foes through walls.

"Any more tests?" John asked while observing his hands.

"None that we know of. You may go where you are needed." The tech said and then turned to speak with the other technicians, but turned around again to inform the Captain of some things that the Captain might believe to be important.

"Uh, Captain, you can always remove the armor if you come back here and feel free to remove the undersuit if you get tired of walking around in it or have some specific reasons for that." The technician said and upon hearing that, John was overjoyed as he still had a lot of time to spend without his armor.

"I'd like to remove it now." John said and stepped back in the armor unit, where it locked him in place while the "hands" prepared to remove his armor.

"As you wish, Captain." The technician agreed and began disassembling Captain Sandman's armor as piece by piece was removed from him until John was ready to walk without the bulky armor on him.

He looked towards Rala who seemed to realize that John had something

in mind for her.

"Thank you." John thanked and went straight for Rala.

"Why did you step out of your shiny armor?" She asked while blushing and looking in John's eyes.

"Well, you seeâ€| Iâ€| hmâ€|" John looked around and noticed the ODSTs still paying a lot of attention to them. "We will discuss this in my cabin." John said and left the pod bay with Rala.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Captain's Cabin, ten minutes later.<br>\*\*' 'Soâ€| why did you remove the armor?" Rala kept pushing for an answer when John was directing her towards the bed where they will finally "make love" with each other.

"Ralaâ€| becauseâ€| I love you." John answered and immediately began kissing Rala on her mandibles. The two fell in the bed and immediately assumed positions with John on the top and Rala down below him.

The two kissed for quite the while until John began planting kisses on Rala's cheeks and neck. Rala was beginning to silently moan, but trying to keep it within her. She removed her helmet and threw it on the ground, while John was beginning to unseal her Sangheili Combat Harness chest piece. John noticed that she also had an undersuit that's color is identical to her own skin color, dark grey, making it invisible. He simply grinned and continued removing her armor and planting kisses along her neck.

Now Rala was softly moaning, but still kept it to a whisper when she suddenly remembered that the doors were unlocked.

"Wait! The doors!" Rala was nervous that someone might catch the two when John calmed her down.

"Relax. I've sealed the doors already." John said and prepared to continue until Rala mentioned an important thing that John forgot to take off.

"Wait, are you going toâ€| umâ€| do it with your undersuit?" She asked shyly.

"Oops." John had totally forgotten about the suit and began removing it. When he removed the undersuit, he only had his underwear left â€" his black boxer briefs. Rala admired his muscular body for a second. He had a lean muscular figure, nothing over-buffed. The augmentations didn't really increase the muscles in size, only in weight so that they can raise heavier objects.

Rala was slowly opening her undersuit and unsealing her armor entirely. John helped her remove her boots and thigh armor while she was removing her undersuit. When the armor was removed and the undersuit gone, John took a second to admire her body. She had a nice body that John immediately began to appreciate. Her breast size was perfectly adequate for her body height and size. John's eyes even went lower down to her reproductive organ.

After that truly short second that he spent observing his beloved Sangheili's body, he went back to kissing Rala on her lips and he could feel his own reproductive organ grow from the arousal gained. He again went down from her lips to her neck, planting loving kisses there. Rala released soft moans as John's hand was placed on her breast and his lips went downwards to the breasts and the abdomen.

After two minutes of kissing Rala's abdomen, John's hand went lower from her breasts all the way down to her crotch where it began running circles around her reproduction organ.

Her soft moans became slightly louder and more intense as she felt the arousal increase. She has never felt anything like this before because she hasn't mated with anyone yet. In human terms, Rala is a ''virgin''. She was looking over to John as she noticed that his head was moving down lower to her crotch and began kissing that area and, eventually, licking her womanhood to prepare her for the main part of their intercourse.

After quite a while of dealing pleasure to Rala and giving her the first orgasm of her life.

During her first orgasm, Rala moaned loudly from the pleasure that she received.

> ''Johnâ€| that wasâ€| great!'' Rala was most pleased from that but she knew that it wasn't over yet.<p>

''We're not done yet, dear.'' He said with a big grin on his face.

She then got up to a sitting position on the bed and noticed John's own organ was aroused to its maximum, just trying to get free from the underwear. She helped him take off his boxer briefs and placed her hand around the seventeen centimeter long organ, not knowing what to do next. She started gently stroking John's erect organ, making him even more aroused. In a short while, she felt that her instinct was telling her to move her mouth closer to that same organ and put it gently inside. She had to be gentle because of her sharp teeth.

John looked down and noticed that Rala had put his manhood in her mouth and was slowly moving her head back and forth. That moment made him seriously aroused and he got his first orgasm pretty quick, because he was not really ready for the action that Rala did. He let it go inside Rala's mouth and then she released his organ to try and clean her mouth.

''Sorryâ€|'' John felt a little awkward after releasing his load into her mouth, without really knowing if she wanted to or not. Rala didn't answer and just gave a smile. John smiled back and watched as Rala swallowed it all down to clear her mouth as she lied down on the bed again and John went over her, kissing her. When John felt that he and Rala were ready, he slowly placed his organ by her crotch, very slowly and very gently pushing it in until his tip was inside. He felt that the inside of her reproductive organ was very wet and he liked it. Rala felt pleasure slowly building up in her crotch and wanted John to proceed, even though she knew that if he were to do it any faster, it would break her equivalent of the human hymen and cause bleeding, that is unless she doesn't have it which she did not

really know herself.

Rala tied her hands around John's back and her legs as well, pushing him inside and she could feel that John's manhood was almost entirely inside her and there was nothing torn. Slowly and gently, John began to pull the organ out and thrust back inwards, and repeat the process many times over, speeding slightly up, and at the same time sharing kisses with Rala. She released intense moans when John started placing kisses on her neck as the pleasure that she was receiving was immense. In a few minutes, John felt the pressure build up in his member as he had the need to release it, but he was trying to hold it in until Rala was ready for her second orgasm.

In another short while, Rala was getting ready to release her second orgasm. When she finally gave into the orgasm, one loud and intense moan of pleasure in unison with John followed while John was releasing his load directly inside of her. Rala released her grip over John and she let him fall directly next to her on the bed, to enjoy the short moment of pleasure from the orgasm along with his Sangheili girlfriend.

"John, that was the best thing in my life!" Rala managed to whisper something between her heavy panting while she was lying on her back, her legs spread apart while John was lying right next to her on his side, having his arm over her abdomen.

"Glad that you enjoyed it. I think we really needed that." John said as he managed to get his breath together faster, without the need for too much panting. He really needed something like that to take his thoughts away from the war as now he really had something to remember for his life " sex with an alien.

"Maybe we should do this a bit more often?" Rala said, now with a much clearer voice, unobstructed by the panting.

"Maybe, but don't push your luck. Heh." John grinned as the thought really had his mind entertained for a while.

The two quickly found themselves in need of a moment of silence and rest.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>November 18<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 0511 hours by UTC.

><strong>John was the first to wake up of the two and he felt the desperate need to clean himself. Luckily, his private cabin had a shower and he could utilize it at any moment and utilize it he did as he went in the shower to wash himself clean and ready for a day of duty, or to prepare for cryo-sleep.

Upon leaving the shower and drying himself off, he noticed that Rala wanted to visit the shower too and was standing right outside it.

"Can I use the shower too?" She asked with a rather cute look on her face.

"Sure. It's our room, after all." John replied with a smile on his smile and went further to a closet on the opposite side of the cabin

where his uniforms were stored. He thought if he should put on his Navy's dress uniform that was recently given to him or if he should put on the undersuit of the MJOLNIR GEN2 armor.

\_ ' 'Ahâ€| fuck it. I've spent a lot of months in cryo-sleep already, it's time I enjoyed the downtime between battles.' '\_ John thought to himself and decided to put on the undersuit, so that he might go down to the pod bay and assemble his armor together, but he noticed that his personal datapad was blinking. He picked it up and it had a new message from the technicians.

\_ ' 'Captain, we've moved the armor assembly/disassembly unit from the pod bay to the bridge deck's research lab. The lab is now used as the armor unit's room just for you. Whenever you need, head two hundred meters to the back of the level from your room where you will find that lab.' '\_

John had found this idea of movement very useful as he didn't need to move around the entire ship anymore just to get his armor on and in case of a boarding party attack, that would be very useful.

John, when he finally put on his undersuit, went out of the cabin, sealed the door behind him and went straight for the room to put his Spartan armor on.

Rala left the shower room in hopes to have a little chat about yesterday but noticed that John was absent. She decided that he had gone to cryo-sleep, but then noticed that instead of his dress uniform, his undersuit was missing and she immediately assumed that John had went to put his armor on.

' 'Damnâ€| ' ' Rala was disappointed, but also felt that she shouldn't disturb John as he really needed to get used to that armor. She quickly found her own bodysuit, dressed it on and began assembling her combat harness back together, but before her combat harness was put back together, she heard a familiar clanking sound nearing her. When she turned to observe what it truly was, she noticed John stalking her in his new armor.

' 'Johnâ€| aboutâ€| about yesterday, Iâ€| ' ' Rala wanted to apologize for yesterday as everything happened so fast that she wasn't able to understand what was going on until everything finished and the feeling of awkwardness hit her and she wasn't sure if John really enjoyed it or not.

' 'Nope. You don't have to apologize or in any other way make yourself look foolish. It was my idea, I started it and if anyone's to blame, it's me.' ' John said and placed his armored hand on Rala's shoulder. Rala placed her hand over his and used her other free hand to take John's other hand. She began to understand that some humans exhibit nobility and take the blame on themselves.

' 'Wellâ€| what's done is done, right? We have officially mated.' ' Rala said with a big grin on her face formed from her mandibles as she was looking into John's blank visor. Her hands released John's hands and slowly went for his helmet, taking it off and revealing his face for her. She put the helmet on the bed that was close by and gave a kiss on his lips, but kept her forehead close to his.

"'You'll always be mineâ€!" She whispered and slowly gave John his helmet back.

"'And you will always be mineâ€!" John whispered back and put his helmet on.

"'Will you join me for a trip to deck twenty three, to visit an observation room? I'd like to see the black of slipspace as we travel to our destination.'' John offered his hand while Rala was sealing her armor together and putting her helmet back on. When she was finished, her hand slipped in John's hand that was lowered from the waiting and she was ready to follow her human lover.

"'Let's go.'' She said while smiling and looking into John's helmet. The pair then proceeded to leave the cabin and head for a nearby elevator that would take them a few decks below, to deck twenty three of the Phoenix-class Battlecruiser.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>So, I hope you enjoyed it. Leave a review with your thoughts on the chapter and if you haven't yet begun following the story or you haven't put it in your favorites yet, but you really like it, I suggest you do.\*\*

#### 14. An End of a War

\*\*Welcome to the final chapter of Halo: Shock Troopers. There will be a crossover co-fic that I will be developing with my brother from another mother, Toruscan that will feature the main characters from Halo: Shock Troopers and his Dawn of the Spartan. So, all of you who have followed this story so far, I suggest you wait for that next story as well. :P

>Anyways, dive into this chapter.<br>\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>December 11th, 1400 hours by UTC.<br>\*\*"Cap'n, approaching the destination in two minutes. I suggest you get ready for a heavy beating once we're out of slipspace.'' One of the bridge officers informed the Captain, who was sitting in his chair armored in his SPARTAN-IV Recruit suit, and returned to his station immediately after.

"'Sir, shall we power up the Magnetic Accelerators?'' One of the two officers responsible for the MAC guns asked, while getting impatient to see some action against the Covenant Loyalists.

"'Do it. It's better to play it safe then being sorry later.'' Captain Sandman answered, convinced that if the guns are offline by the time the ship leaves slipspace, the Battlecruiser would get barraged heavily by a ton of plasma torpedoes because it won't be able to respond in time.

"'Magnetic coils charged up, Captain.'' The other Gunnery Officer responded when the MACs were ready to be fired.

"'Very well. I want the ship in Tactical Condition Alpha Two. Action stations, now!'' John ordered around the bridge for the ship to be at

its best condition for the fight. Immediately after, the TACCON Alpha 2 was being issued across the ship with pilots getting in their starfighters and crewmembers manning their stations along with Marines and ODSTs dressing their armor on, grabbing weapons and preparing to repel boarding parties.

"Attention all hands, leaving slipspace in three seconds." Jessica, the ship's AI, announced over the intercom to the entire crew.

The UNSC Fire of Humanity left slipspace straight in the middle of a battle between the Covenant Separatists and the Covenant Loyalists where it was immediately taken under the sights of two CCS-class Battlecruisers commanded by the Jiralhanae, the Brutes.

"Sir, two CCS-class Battlecruisers, the CCS dash U One Zero Eight Two and CCS dash U One Zero Nine Eight are taking aim on us. They're charging their plasma torpedoes!" One of the Gunnery Officers informed the Captain, naming the two CCS-class Battlecruisers by their UNSC identification.

"Secure all forward bulkheads! Prepare for impact! Open up all missile pods and prepare the missile turrets!" Captain Sandman predicted the impact of the plasma torpedoes to hit the front of the ship, even though the sides could be hit easily as well. After his orders, the missile pods opened and Archer missiles were being prepared to get sent out of their pods.

"Plasma torpedoes fired, impact in one second!" Jessica announced three plasma torpedoes successfully hit the forward sections of the UNSC Fire of Humanity and even gutted the main observation deck below the hull of the ship entirely in flames. The entire level detached from the ship and was heading down to the Ark due to the gravitational pull of the installation.

"Sir, we've taken significant damage in decks one through fifteen and minor damage in decks twenty eight to thirty one. We've lost our main observation deck completely!" Commander Lowell informed and audible fright for his life could be heard in his voice.

"Respond with all we've got! Fire MACs then follow up with missiles!" John then turned to face the Commander. "Issue an order for all pilots to leave the ship immediately and engage the Battlecruisers. Order them to draw the attention of the Battlecruisers away from us. Also, arm one of the Longswords with a nuke and put it under remote control." John developed a plan for a Longsword to make a suicide run with a nuke primed.

"Yes, Sir." Commander Lowell then reached for the communicator in his ear and the intercom in the hangar bays activated immediately.

"All fighters, depart from the ship and engage the Covenant, except November Zero One. November Zero One is to be armed with a HAVOK-grade tactical nuclear weapon." The Commander announced over intercom and the pilot of the N0-1 Longsword got very upset. He realized that he wouldn't be allowed to pilot the craft, not even by the remote.

All fifteen GA-TL1 Longswords immediately departed the ship and engaged the Covenant Seraph-class Starfighters in the middle of the

showdown between the two Battlecruisers and the UNSC Fire of Humanity. November 0-1 was deployed remotely from the ship and it began evading all Covenant starfighters on approach to it. It was heading dead on one of the Covenant Battlecruisers.

"Our Interceptor has went past the Covenant starfighters. No pursuers. It's getting massive point defense fire directed against it now." The Remote Control Officer informed while he was piloting the Longsword into position.

"Keep firing the missiles everywhere until we're dry!" John didn't want to give up and his order made it obligatory to empty up the storerooms of the ship, free from all missiles. The Archer missiles were flying to the front of the Phoenix-class Battlecruiser, at all ships registered as Covenant Loyalist-owned. The impacts weren't much to lower the shields, but they did cause a lot of annoyance especially for the short-tempered Brute bridge crews.

"Sir, we're authorized to zero in with nukes in case the HAVOK has no effect." Jessica informed the Captain while he was looking directly through the forward observation window while sitting on his chair. Rala 'Thenam suddenly entered the bridge to observe the battle.

"Affirmative, Jessica. Prepare the Shivas, load two in, keep five at the ready." John demanded and immediately, two Shiva-class nuclear missiles were loaded in missile pods, ready to fire.

"Sir, the Longsword has rammed the Battlecruiser. HAVOK detonation in threeâ€| twoâ€|" The Remote Control Officer had successfully finished his mission. "Oneâ€|" Suddenly, a large and bright spark appeared on the side of one of the CCS-class Battlecruisers, engulfing it seconds later.

"Sir, the Battlecruiser's shields are down! Our missiles can now be delivered right inside them!" One of the Gunnery Officers cheerfully said as the little kamikaze delivery was a success.

"Stop firing the missiles everywhere and concentrate on the unshielded Battlecruiser!" With this order, the ship ceased firing its missiles everywhere and began a concentrated fire on the unshielded CCS-class Battlecruiser, causing massive damage, but still not enough to destroy it entirely.

"Fire both MAC cannons at it and make sure you hit the reactor. I want that thing exploding as brightly as possible!" John looked at Jessica with an angry look and the AI immediately proceeded to aim the MAC guns at the Battlecruiser's approximate fusion reactor area. She took control of the MAC gun firing process on herself and charged the MAC coils up for immediate firing.

The coils charged and two six hundred ton ferric tungsten shells with depleted uranium cores were loaded in the cannons and prepared for fire. The first coils immediately pulled the slugs out of position and quickly swapped power with the second coils so that the shells may be propelled further in both barrels. This power transfer continued quickly and continuously until the last coil was deactivated and the shells left both MAC barrels at roughly a hundred kilometers per second. More than enough to reach the CCS-class Battlecruisers in under a second. The shells hit the unshielded

Battlecruiser, penetrated most of its inner decks and penetrated the fusion reactor. The reactor was damaged beyond repairs and it, along with the ship and its crew, was engulfed in a massive explosion that damaged other ships nearby, including the Fire of Humanity.

"Sir, major damage on multiple decks. I am sealing the bulkheads now." Jessica informed of the situation while sealing bulkheads on multiple damaged decks.

"We've still got one more Brute ship to worry about before we can get back behind the Elites and provide sniper fire and that thing's about to engage us side-to-side." John rolled his chair to the starboard side of the bridge where the Battlecruiser was approaching and watched over the Gunnery Officers preparing all the weapons on that side.

"Perhaps we should try pinpoint slipping?" Rala suggested but little did she know that with Shaw-Fujikawa Translight Engines it was nearly impossible unless someone had done the maths for five days during combat.

"Rala, our slipspace drives are incapable of doing so. Our ship would most likely get disintegrated or become stuck in slipspace during our vain attempts at pinpoint slipping and none of us would like to remain in slipstream space for the rest of our lives." John explained the lack of precision for human slipspace drives and Rala's option, even if it did sound good, was useless for this ship.

"So, we're going to have to slug it out, as you humans say?" Rala asked curiously as the first plasma torpedoes hit the sides of the Phoenix-class Battlecruiser.

"Yes." John answered, heavily sighing, and then turning back to the Gunnery Officers, coordinating their fire on weak points. "Remember, fire on their weapons when they charge up. Their shields are getting lowered every time they're fired and that gives us our chance of defeating it with a full broadside.

The 50mm point defense guns were firing all across the ship while the Archer missiles were catching the openings in the Battlecruiser shields when the plasma torpedo launchers were charging up, thus seriously damaging the Covenant vessel and infuriating the Brutes in the bridge of the Covenant Battlecruiser.

"Sir, they're preparing a full broadside! Our ship is already badly damaged and I don't think we'll hold it!" Commander Lowell immediately hid behind the holo-table as his usual stoic, unmoved voice was changed by a cowardly one. It was understandable by Captain Sandman as he felt the same "awe and cowardice. Deep down in his mind, there was a voice telling him to run away as fast as he could, but he always suppressed that voice and it never reached his head.

"Brace for impact!" John shouted across the bridge and grabbed a hold of two Gunnery Officer seats while the plasma torpedoes began bombarding the UNSC Fire of Humanity, seriously damaging its starboard sections. The plasma torpedoes impacted with such a force, that some crewmembers including Sandman himself were thrown away from their seats.

When John woke up, he saw everything in a blur but he could make out that Rala was holding her head on him and her hands tied around him. He was being held on her thighs.

"Ralaâ€œ I am fine." John said while clearing his throat from any dirt that might've gotten in there. Rala slowly freed him as he got up on his feet and observed the bridge that was almost in ruins, but the windows were still holding firmly. He turned his gaze to the AI " Jessica.

"Take control of all weapon systems and fire a full broadside on the Battlecruiser. If we go down, we'll go down loudly. Fire the loaded nukes on my mark." He gave a clear order which Jessica acknowledged, seeing as how the Gunnery Officers were incapable of continuing their duty.

"Affirmative, Captain. We're going down with a loud bang, as ordered." John slowly but surely went to the starboard side of the bridge to look outside the window and noticed the Battlecruiser of the Brutes was charging up the plasma launchers for another salvo. The UNSC Fire of Humanity was surely to be destroyed after this salvo when suddenly, a CAS-class Assault Carrier went straight through the Brute Battlecruiser with a direct ramming maneuver.

"Shipmaster Rtas 'Vadum of the Shadow of Intent here. We just gave you a second chance to make a difference here, so make it count, human." The Shipmaster of the ship that just saved the UNSC Fire of Humanity announced over the communications as his ship was heading down for the Ark itself.

"Thank you, Shipmaster 'Vadum." Captain Sandman thanked the Shipmaster in a reply and turned back to his seat.

"Jessica, get us behind the Sangheili fleet. I want a full damage report as soon as we're behind them."

"Aye, Captain." Jessica acknowledged and immediately lit up the engines of the ship, turning it around in a swift maneuver and bringing it behind the Sangheili fleet.

"We've suffered massive damage all across the frontal sections and starboard sections of the ship, Captain. We can stabilize the condition of the ship, but we'll need to reach Mars's shipyards if we want to repair the ship back to its prime condition." Jessica gave a short report of the damage taken with a stoic tone.

"Yeahâ€œ" John sounded sad as he looked around and noticed that many of his bridge officers were killed in the first broadside salvo. Doctors and Marines rushed in the bridge to deliver the wounded to medical bays, while delivering the dead somewhere else. John moved his chair back to the front of the holo-table and Rala slowly approached him from the back and sat on his lap.

"We can still keep fighting, can't we?" Rala looked into John's eyes, observing them carefully.

"We can, though I am not sure for how long. More than half of our arsenal was used up at Earth but here we've got a few MAC shells left." John said and then Jessica proceeded to correct him.

"We've still got eight MAC shells, Captain, and one thousand five hundred forty seven Archer missiles ready along with seven Shiva-class nuclear missiles and one HAVOK-class tactical nuclear weapon." Jessica corrected while her hologram was badly flickering from the damage the ship took.

"As much as I know you, one MAC shell is enough for you to change the tide of a battle." Rala tried cheering John up and a big smile from him. John cheered up almost immediately and began formulating a new plan.

"Jessica, how long until we can lead the fleet into the final slug fest?" John planned on his ship to lead the Sangheili fleet against the Brutes in one final exchange of fire.

"Not long. There's nothing much we can do during battle. We can still survive one and a half broadside plasma torpedo salvos thanks to our internal honeycomb bracing." Jessica replied and raised an eyebrow as she seemingly understood John's plan.

"Oh, you're not going to!" She was interrupted when John announced his plan.

"Yes, the Fire of Humanity will assume command and lead the fleet back in. Prepare all weapons for a final barrage. Load in the nukes."

"How many nukes?" Jessica asked most curiously before beginning to load the nukes in the pods.

"All the nukes, Jessica. Bring our ship in front of the fleet." John said and the ship was immediately moved to the front of the Sangheili fleet.

"Alright, we'll die first, Captain. Let's do this!" Jessica's black humor kicked in and John, along with Rala, seemed to be getting slightly annoyed by that.

"Which ass-end of the Universe was your humor pulled out of, Jessica? Seriously, it's too dark." John commented on Jessica's humor and Rala silently chuckled at the thought of an argument between a human and an AI.

"Oh, I'm a flash cloned brain of Jessica Mackenzie." Jessica tried to make up excuses.

"Doesn't seem so. Jessica never had such black humor." John didn't believe in it, but the AI had no proof so she couldn't confirm her words.

"Wellâ€¢ fine. I won't try to argue, but I still am a copy of Lieutenant Mackenzie." Jessica said and her hologram of a human female ODST in the battle dress uniform disappeared from the holo-tanks.

"What are you laughing at?" John tried to stop Rala's laughing, but was about to laugh himself.

"Human against AI in an argument." Rala honestly answered.

John found that thought amusing himself as usually humans don't argue with artificial intelligences, but then he switched back to reality â€“ the Battle of Installation 00 also known as the Ark.

''Captain, our ship is ready for a second attack and I've notified the Sangheili ships that we're taking the lead. They've all agreed to make our ship the temporary flagship.'' Jessica chimed in again and Rala stood up from John's lap, freeing him. The Captain immediately stood up and approached the window in front of the bridge.

''Flank speed, Jessica. I want the ship passing by that Assault Carrier and the Battlecruiser. Let's trick the Brutes into firing on their own vessels, but don't stop. Once we're behind the entire Brute fleet, fire two nukes at two separate locations, but try not to hit the Sangheili fleet.'' John developed a tricky plan in just ten seconds after observing the enemy fleet with his own eyes. Rala was amazed at this speed of thought.

''Aye, Captain. Moving the ship across the entire enemy fleet, but what of the Sangheili fleet?'' Jessica acknowledged his order and immediately put the ship in motion and accelerated the ship to maximum possible sub-light speed.

''Order them to start barraging the Brutes with plasma torpedoes and when we've took down their shields with nukes, order them to charge in and destroy every ship they can identify as hostile.'' John displayed his leadership skills at their best yet again, albeit his plan had his own ship being the bait.

''I've sent the order. The Sangheili seem to approve of it and they've begun barraging with their frontal plasma torpedo launchers, but I still don't think it'll be very effective because the Brutes outnumber us one and a half to one, even with the battle nearing the end.'' Jessica calculated but she left John's plan out of the equation for some reason.

''Then we'll have to complete this faster.'' John said and observed the ships becoming bigger as the Fire of Humanity was moving up and it quickly entered a gap between a Brute Assault Carrier and a Battlecruiser. The two ships immediately fired plasma torpedoes but the Fire of Humanity managed to evade all of them by speeding past the ships and their launcher firing arcs.

The plasma torpedoes were supposed to track the human Battlecruiser, but at such close ranges they immediately corrected their course and impacted the nearest available ships. The CCS-class Battlecruiser was immediately destroyed thanks to the Assault Carriers broadside salvo, but the Assault Carrier's shields were lowered down to forty percent.

The UNSC Fire of Humanity went outside of the formation of the Brute fleet and immediately made a fast turn by one hundred and eighty degrees, having its MAC guns aligned with the Brute fleet.

''Fire the nukes here and here.'' John pointed at two distant locations across the Covenant Loyalist fleet formation, each on the furthest ships. The Shiva-class nukes were fired from the missile pods and they rushed past all debris when they reached their designated areas and exploded, seriously damaging the shields of every Covenant ship in the blast radius. Some ships completely lost

their shields.

There were 12 Brute ships left out of the original 30 in the Covenant Loyalist fleet above the Ark. One was an Assault Carrier. All were damaged by the nuclear missiles and they were receiving heavy damage from the incoming eight Sangheili CCS-class Battlecruisers from their front and from the UNSC Fire of Humanity at their back.

"Jessica, I want you to concentrate our missile fire on the Assault Carrier as soon as its shields are down entirely, but first, fire off a MAC salvo." John wanted to take out the Assault Carrier first so that it doesn't inflict any casualties upon the Sangheili.

"I agree, the Assault Carrier must be taken out immediately." Jessica agreed and she charged up the MAC coils of the ship. When the coils were charged, the shells were placed in the barrels and immediately left the barrels through the frontal end at maximum speed. After less than a second, they hit the Assault Carrier and lowered its shields down entirely, because they were already badly damaged. A barrage of six hundred Archer missiles then followed up, hitting the Assault Carrier's back side and engines and doing serious damage to it while one Sangheili Battlecruiser was bombarding it from the front. Soon after enduring many missiles and plasma torpedoes, the Assault Carrier's hull finally gave in to the damage and it split into many pieces with a violent explosion.

"The Assault Carrier is down and out and two extra Battlecruisers have just been destroyed by the Sangheili. The Brutes are entirely preoccupied by the Sangheili and we can easily begin picking them off. Also, you might want to take a look down." Jessica suggested the Captain a sight to behold and John really did look down through the reinforced glass window below his feet at the frontal part of the bridge where the observation area is at. He noticed a ring-like structure emerging from the massive installation.

"What the hell is that?" John said and then Rala came in from behind to observe the construct herself.

"That's a Halo!" She said with hate towards the installation.

"What does that thing do?" John was curious as what its purpose was.

"Halos eradicate all sentient life in the Galaxy. From the classified data I've managed to crack open, the Halos are meant to eradicate sapient life to starve the Flood to death. They were built by the Forerunners hundreds of thousands of years ago." Jessica explained while she was inside an ONI network, cracking open several dozen files on the Halos and all other Forerunner Installations.

"Shitâ€|" John was awed by the ringworld. From afar it may look like a peaceful installation with lush vegetation and life but from inside it's a weapon.

"Captain, the Sangheili have almost destroyed the entire Brute fleet. Two Battlecruisers remain and we can take them out with a MAC salvo." Jessica informed the Captain who then turned to face her and nodded, giving the signal for a MAC salvo. Two MAC shells were

immediately fired and each shell hit its own ship, crippling the two ships the shells were fired at.

"Oorah!" John cheered at the sight of the Covenant ships being engulfed in flames.

"All ships, this is Shipmaster Rtas 'Vadum. Return to Earth through the portal. The Spartan and the Arbiter have devised a plan that will cause major destruction in a rather large radius." The Shipmaster contacted the fleet that was still celebrating its victory above the Installation.

"Shipmaster, surely you must be joking! Who will evacuate the Marines?" John was sure there were still human Marines and Sangheili on the ground, but the Shipmaster proved otherwise.

"Shipmaster Sandman, they will be evacuated on my ship! Now go! Get out of here, quick!" The Sangheili Shipmaster referred to Captain Sandman as a "Shipmaster" instead of his Naval rank as this was the Covenant equivalent of a Captain.

"Fine, Shipmaster." John agreed to leave through the slipspace portal and went back to his chair and allowed Rala to sit on his lap again.

"Jessica, set course back for Earth." John ordered as Rala sat down on John's lap and the remaining Sangheili ships entered the portal.

"Sealing all bulkheads, recalling fighter squadrons." Jessica informed of her actions as all bulkheads got sealed and the fighter squadrons returned back to the ship. The hangars sealed and the Fire of Humanity entered the slipspace portal as well and was heading back to Earth at two thousand light years per day â€“ the maximum speed the Ark's portal generated.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Twenty hours after entering the portal, UNSC Fire of Humanity's bridge, 1435 hours by UTC, December 12<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*.

><strong>"Captain, we've got a slipspace malfunction and we're forced to exit it, otherwise we'd be stuck." Jessica chimed in from a holo-tank that was the closest to John. John was sleeping on his chair, his head laid back on it and Rala was sleeping right on him. This was a rather awkward sight for the AI.

"Huh?" John slowly woke up and thanks to his augmentations he could get a grasp of the situation much faster than before. "Ohâ€œ goddammit, the hell just happened? I wanted to have aâ€œ" John suddenly looked down to notice Rala in a cute position sleeping on him. "Never mind. Did we leave slipspace already?"

"Yes, Captain. I am currently trying to understand what happened, butâ€œ slipspace rupture detected!" Jessica was shocked to find a sudden slipspace rupture and she could detect a high tonnage vessel leaving slipspace right next to the UNSC Fire of Humanity. "It's on a direct course towards us! Ten kilometers and counting down!" John slowly closed his eyes and wrapped his hands around Rala, in hopes to survive or save her in case they get rammed out of existence.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>The UNSC Fire of Humanity is about to get rammed. Will John, Rala and the rest of the crew along with the ship survive somehow, or will they get wiped out of existence by a ship of high tonnage? Find out in the ''Reclaimers''!<br>Anyways, leave a review of what do you guys/girls think that might be trying to ram the battle-torn Phoenix-class Battlecruiser.\*\*

End  
file.